THE LONDON ACOUSTIC GUITAR SHOW 2014 ISSUE ALL THE ARTISTS & ALL THE GEAR

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GEORGE LOWDEN
ON CELEBRATING HIS 40TH ANNIVERSARY

GABRIELLE APLIN
FROM YOUTUBE TO NUMBER ONE

JON GOMM
DOING THINGS HIS WAY

"TAKING DRUGS WAS NEVER A BAD HABIT OF MINE... IT WAS BUYING TOO MANY GUITARS!"

JAMES DEAN BRADFIELD

THE MANICS FRONTMAN ON *FUTUROLOGY*, HIS ENTIRE ACOUSTIC GUITAR COLLECTION & FINDING INSPIRATION IN ALTERNATE TUNINGS

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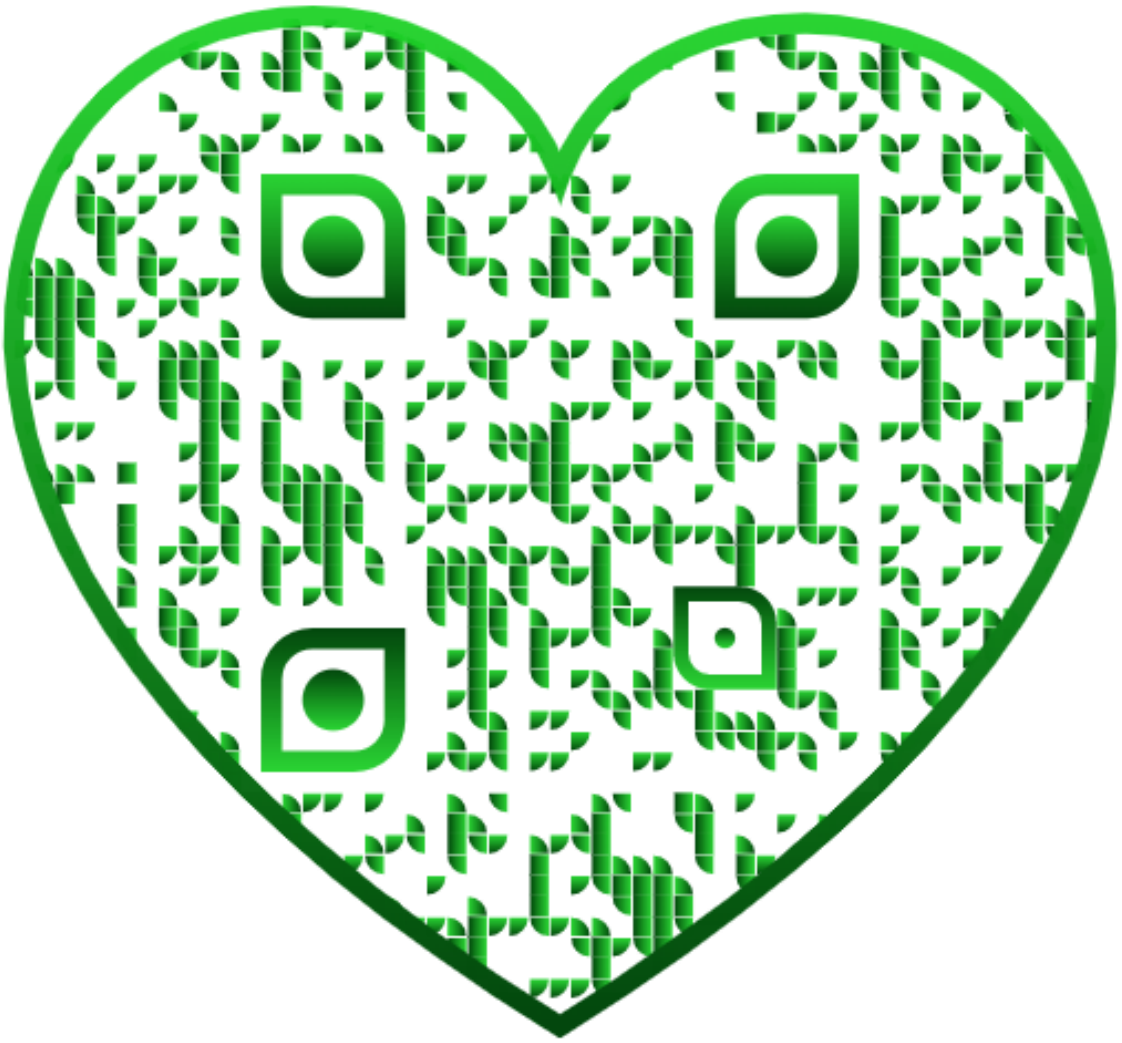
20 PAGES OF BRAND NEW GEAR FROM: PATRICK JAMES EGGLE, C.F. MARTIN & CO., LOWDEN, LAKEWOOD, TAYLOR, ROZAWOOD



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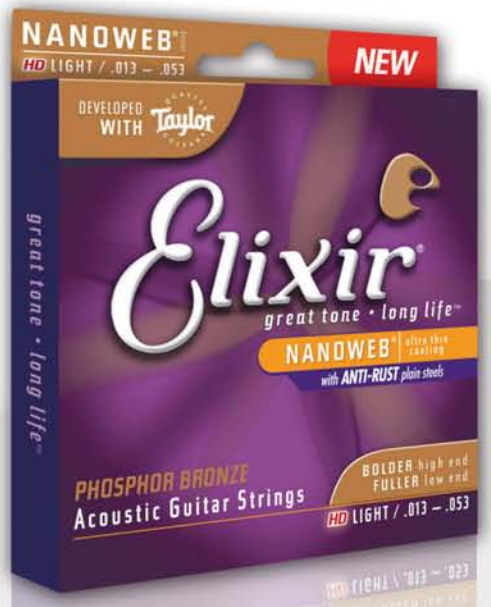

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A LITTLE WORD

It's time for the London Acoustic Guitar Show – and what a weekend we've got in store for you! Held over September 13 & 14 at London's Olympia, we invite you to come and join some of the world's greatest players and most respected guitar brands and luthiers. This year we're also launching Electric Live – an electric guitar exhibition for the plugged-in brethren. Appearing over the weekend we've got Squeeze's Glenn Tilbrook and Chris Difford, Gabrielle Aplin, Tony McManus, Doug Aldrich, Bernie Marsden, Jon Gomm, Lewis Watson, and headlining the show on Sunday 14 is the inimitable Nile Rodgers, followed by the Manic Street Preachers' frontman James Dean Bradfield.

The Manics are hot property right now. With just about every music critic hailing their new album *Futurology* one of their best – as well as it entering the UK album chart at number two – James Dean Bradfield's guitar playing is, once again, in the limelight. Before playing his acoustic headline set at this year's show, we caught up with him in Soho to talk about his entire acoustic collection, what he's got planned for the show, and buying guitars from (what was) Fat Rick's Guitar Emporium while still drunk.

The gear pages are also hot property this month; every brand you see in this issue will be at the show. I'll let you in on a little secret – two of the guitars in this issue became instant favourites for me. They're both all-'hog – I'll let you guess which ones I'm talking about.

I'm sure you're aware 2014 is George Lowden's 40th anniversary year. To celebrate, he's released the Wee Lowden, resurrected Pierre Bensusan's Old Lady guitar (page 64), announced anniversary upgrades available to order on all models, and to top it all off, he's coming to LAGS with Jon Gomm.

Not so long ago, Patrick James Eggle called me and said he was dropping off a guitar for me to take a look at. Naturally, I cleared my diary and asked him to come as soon as he could. When I opened the case, sat in there was the guitar (albeit it with a few amendments) I'd heard at just about every festival I've been to this summer. Jake Bugg's PJE goes everywhere with him, and when I bumped into Jake backstage at Glastonbury not so long ago, the guitar wasn't far behind. After a surge of interest in small bodied, mahogany guitars (thanks to Jake's popularity, or are we all going environmentally conscious?) PJE has been hard at work, and presented this parlour to me (page 50), which pretty much shared Jake's guitar brief and came from the same set of mahogany his guitar did. It's a vintage-inspired parlour, built using traditional methods (check out the arrow jointed headstock) with a modern, somewhat in vogue, appeal. I'm sure you'll agree that it's absolutely sublime.

Okay, my secret's out. At least one of them, anyway... Enjoy the issue and see you in London for the show!

Guy Little
Editor

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30 JAMES DEAN BRADFIELD

Following 2013's introspective *Rewind The Film*, James Dean Bradfield & co return with twelfth studio album *Futurology* flanked by a European sensibility and new edge. With a seamless reinvention, *Rewind The Film*'s successor is unmistakably Manics, but not like before... We talk guitars, songwriting – and headlining the London Acoustic Guitar Show.

RETUNE YOUR EARS

10 Listen to something new, with Paul Strange

24 JON GOMM

The Cinderella story of Jon Gomm's rise to international acclaim is already a legend among players seeking their fortune on the highways and byways of the internet. Now busier than ever, this fiercely independent musician took time out from a hectic schedule to talk to us in advance of his appearance at this year's London Acoustic Guitar Show...

20 GABRIELLE APLIN

A YouTube sensation, Gabrielle Aplin's climb to fame has been deliberately slow, but right now, as she tells Julian Piper, every day feels like a holiday... Gabrielle talks C.F. Martin & Co., and playing the London Acoustic Guitar Show

16 JOHN SMITH

Andy Hughes talks to John Smith ahead of appearing at the London Acoustic Guitar Show with Elixir Strings about *Great Lakes*, songwriting, and Fylde guitars.

GUITAR TECHNIQUES

Improve your playing with our techniques section...

With 12 pages of different level-specific techniques, whether you're a novice or an expert our columns have something for everyone.

THE EXPERTS

108 CLIVE CARROLL
DADGAD musings with 'Black Moon'

110 LEON HUNT
Some old time playing with John Hartford

112 DANIEL HO
Exploring the colours of the C chord

114 THOMAS LEEB
Learn the main riff to Thomas' new tune

116 DAVID MEAD
Discovering DADGAD

118 CHRIS WOODS
Spicing up your 12-bar blues

SPECIAL FEATURES

38 LONDON ACOUSTIC GUITAR SHOW FEATURING ELECTRIC LIVE 2014
Over September 13 & 14, the London Acoustic Guitar Show featuring Electric Live brings together some of the world's great guitar players and a host of the most notable guitar brands – all under one roof at London's Olympia. We check out who's playing, who's exhibiting, and everything else you can expect to see at this year's show which now includes a dedicated show just for the electric player!

96 IN THE LOOP
When it's just you, a loop pedal, and an acoustic guitar at a gig you need to use every trick possible to keep the interest of the audience – so this month we're looking at septuple timing.

88 LOWDEN GUITARS AT 40
As the Northern Irish guitar builder celebrates 40 years making some of the most sought after acoustics, we chat to George Lowden about what he's learned after four decades in the business, and what we can expect from him next...

GEAR REVIEWS

Acoustic keeps you up to date with what's hot and what's not in our gear reviews section.

50 PATRICK JAMES EGGLE PARLOUR
It's retro all the way with this latest parlour guitar from the redoubtable Patrick James Eggle... David Mead comes over all old timey

54 ROZAWOOD 28 DREADNOUGHT
A new twist on a familiar looking model meets the critical eye of David Mead...

58 MARTIN 000-15M
Understated, incredible value for money, and boldly in fashion; Guy Little hankers for the all-'hog Martin...

64 LOWDEN "OLD LADY"
Pierre Bensusan's faithful six-string companion becomes a 40th anniversary signature model... David Mead spends an afternoon with the Old Lady

68 TANGLEWOOD TWB 24 M5
Made for duellin' or keepin' on a-foolin'? Alun Lower gets to grips with a toe-stompin' bargain from Tanglewood...

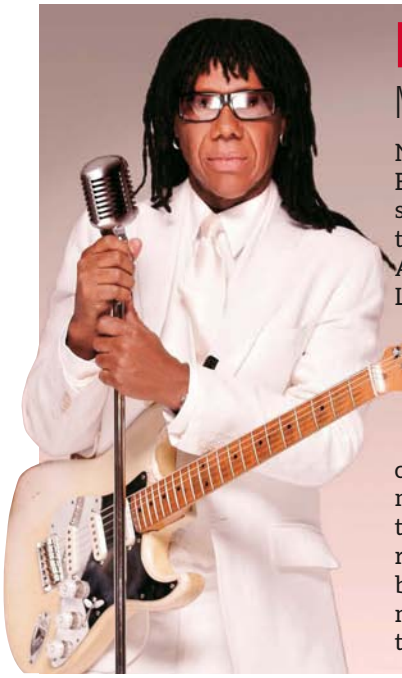
70 LAKEWOOD M-38 CUSTOM
An unusual European union of tonewoods feature in this custom guitar from Lakewood... David Mead keeps an open mind

74 TAYLOR 810 2014
Can a great guitar get even better? Alun Lower finds out how Taylor are trying to improve on perfection...

80 FAITH NEPTUNE MAHOGANY
The humble all-mahogany acoustic gets a sharp makeover courtesy of Patrick James Eggle and Faith Guitars. Alun Lower takes a look...

NEWS DESK

ACOUSTIC BRINGS YOU ALL OF THE LATEST PRODUCTS AND NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF ACOUSTIC MUSIC.



NILE RODGERS TO HEADLINE ELECTRIC LIVE 2014

New electric guitar event running alongside the London Acoustic Guitar Show this year

Nile Rodgers will star at Electric Live, the new show launched this year in tandem with The London Acoustic Guitar Show, at London Olympia. He will play on both days, Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 September 2014.

Nile Rodgers' contribution to popular music has been one of the most significant of recent times, whether it be penning some of the most influential songs of the disco era with Chic, or producing countless hits for a wide variety of other artists spanning multiple decades and genres. Rodgers, as an artist, producer or writer, is responsible for the sales of more than 100 million records. In 2014, he was awarded three Grammy Awards for his work with Daft Punk on their album *Random Access Memories* and the hit single 'Get Lucky'.

Nile Rodgers will appear on both days, holding a Q&A and masterclass accompanied by his world-renowned 'Hitmaker' guitar.

For more information, see page 43 and visit ***www.londonacousticguitarshow.com*** for information on how to get your tickets.

COLE CLARK SECURES UK DISTRIBUTION DEAL WITH ZED MUSIC CAFÉ

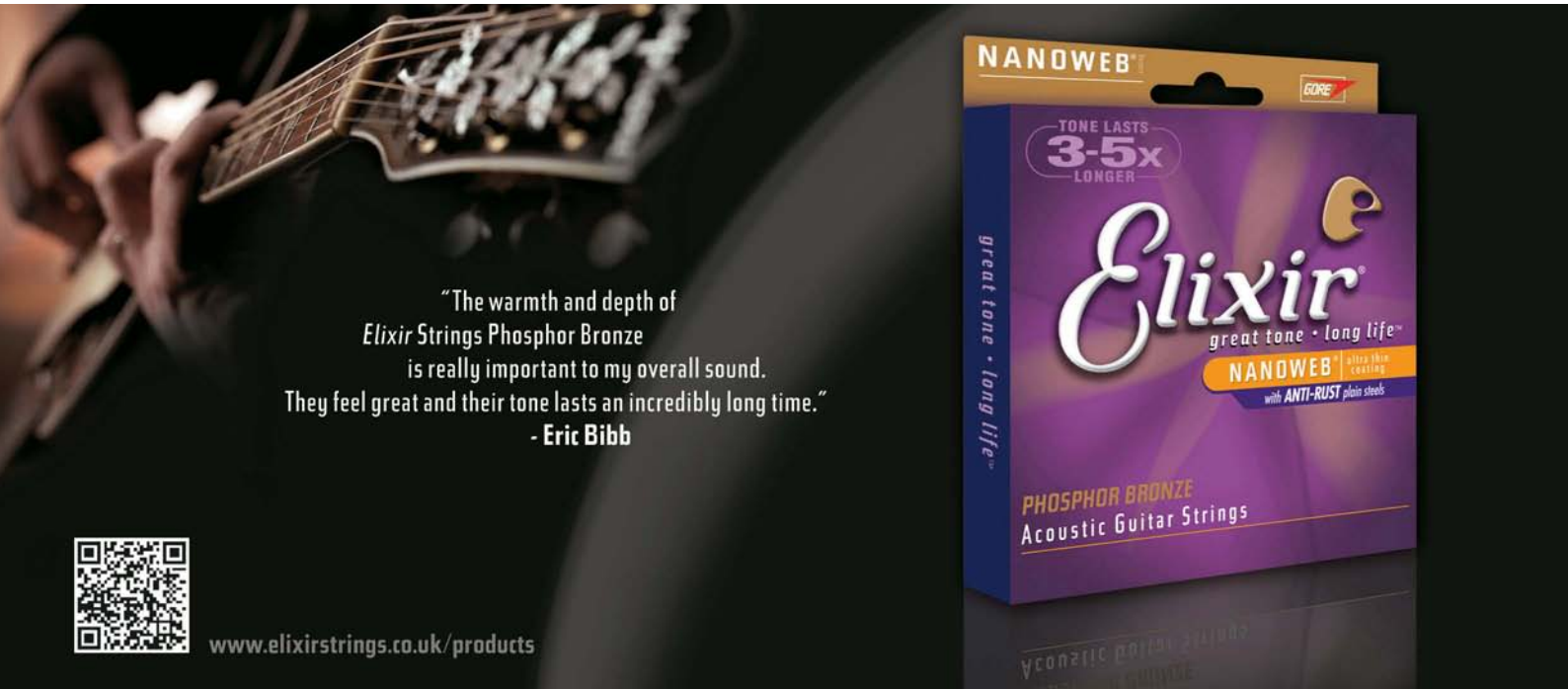
New business debuts at the London Acoustic Guitar Show 2014 & sees Australian brand Cole Clark make a return to the UK

Cole Clark has secured a UK distribution deal with Zed Music Café. Due to open in October 2014, Zed Music Café will be representing Cole Clark guitars as both a retailer and distributor within the UK.

'We are thrilled to be involved in the London Acoustic Guitar Show and with Zoe from Zed Music Café,' says Miles Jackson, CEO of Cole Clark Guitars. 'We will have a range of our new products on display ready to play at LAGS 2014. Cole Clark is privileged to have artists like James Dean Bradfield, Jack Johnson, Snow Patrol, Xavier Rudd and 5 Seconds Of Summer playing our guitars.'

'I can't wait to bring Cole Clark over here. As a musician myself, I appreciate the amazing tone of the guitars and it's about time the UK heard that, too,' says Zoe Ashfield, owner of Zed Music Café.

For more information, visit: ***www.facebook.com/zedmusiccafe***



JAMES DEAN BRADFIELD TO HEADLINE THE LONDON ACOUSTIC GUITAR SHOW 2014

Lewis Watson also joins line-up to perform on Sunday 14 September

James Dean Bradfield will headline the London Acoustic Guitar Show on Sunday 14 September in an exclusive acoustic appearance. With more than 40 singles – including 'Motorcycle Emptiness', 'A Design For Life', 'Kevin Carter', 'Everything Must Go', 'If You Tolerate This Your Children Will Be Next', 'The Masses Against The Classes', 'Your Love Alone Is Not Enough' – as well as 12 studio albums, the Manic Street Preachers have carved out an enduring career fuelled by anthemic guitar riffs, making them one of the most important British rock bands of recent times.

James Dean Bradfield's headline acoustic set will demonstrate his lasting songwriting and performing prowess, playing a selection of hits from his back catalogue as well as new tracks from *Futurology*.

Lewis Watson is just one representative of a growing number of singer-songwriters finding fame and record deals after uploading original tunes and a few covers to YouTube. The 21-year-old, from Oxford, first established himself by going the independent digital route, working to build his audience online and firming up his position as the shining star of the YouTube singer-songwriter era. His debut album *The Morning* charted at number 28 in the UK album charts, and he'll be performing with his trusty Patrick James Eggle Linville.

James Dean Bradfield and Lewis Watson join Squeeze, Gabrielle Aplin, Tony McManus, and Jon Gomm.

The London Acoustic Guitar Show featuring Electric Live takes place on September 13 & 14, 2014. One ticket gains entry to both shows. For more information and to buy tickets, visit: ***www.londonacousticguitarshow.com***

C.F. MARTIN & CO. CELEBRATES LEGACY OF OUTSTANDING CRAFTSMANSHIP WITH NEW MODELS

Five new guitars released at the Summer NAMM show in Nashville

C. F. Martin & Co. has celebrated its outstanding legacy of craftsmanship by releasing five new models at Summer NAMM 2014 in Nashville. Two limited edition anniversary models pay tribute to Martin's factory locations on Sycamore Street in Nazareth, PA and Navojoa, Mexico. Also announced is the Nashville show special, a follow up to the popular D-42 model showcased at Summer NAMM 2012, and two new additions to the X series.

The 000RS25 Navojoa 25th anniversary commemorates the 25th anniversary of C. F. Martin & Co.'s Navojoa facility. This model features a solid Sitka spruce top with a newly designed scalloped X bracing pattern and solid sapele back and sides and displays a 25th anniversary logo. The model will be limited to 250 guitars.

The D-18 Sycamore celebrates 50 years of guitar manufacturing at their Sycamore Street location. This dreadnought 14-fret guitar has solid sycamore back and sides married with a torrefied Sitka spruce top. Torrefaction accelerates the natural aging process, which in turn gives the guitar the appearance and warmth of an aged guitar. Production of this guitar will be limited to 50.

This year's Nashville show special, the SS-OM42-14 is a spin-off of the D-42 Sinker Mahogany model from the Nashville 2012 show. The solid Adirondack spruce top and Sinker mahogany back and sides have a polished gloss finish with an oak toner burst and Golden Era style bracing. This model will be limited to 25 and the labels will be signed by Chris Martin IV.

The OMXAE black and DXAE black are the new additions to the X Series. Both are equipped with Fishman Sonitone USB electronics.

For more information on these guitars visit: ***www.martinguitar.com*** or their UK partners, Westside Distribution: ***www.westsidedistribution.com***

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RETUNE YOUR EARS

Presenting new, interesting or alternative musicians. Listen to something different.
With Paul Strange

GERARD KELLY
STYLE… (SINGER-SONGWRITER)

I play lead guitar and write songs for Nou Enle, a folk-rock acoustic five-piece from South East London. We come from different backgrounds, so those elements add to the overall sound. Our songs could be grouped into various genres – indie, alternative, jazz, blues, even Latin. Our lighter sound gives us the freedom to do that successfully. Stephanie Boyle is our lead singer, Christiana Campbell plays violin, Dom Thorncroft is on double bass and John Neil plays cajón and percussion. Vocal harmonies are a large part of our sound, so we often have three harmonies as well as Steph's vocal. Steph, Dom and I do much of the songwriting, though everyone creates their own instrumental parts. We've recently been recording our debut album *Seasons*. The title track is my favourite. It's an unusual style for us, like a mini-epic. Plus it's everyone in the band's favourite, which is cool. I've been playing the same acoustic guitar for a long time – a Kimbara D-74. It's a budget instrument, but I've always loved its sound, so I've kept it. I DI through the PA, and for recording I'll mic it through a Rode NT1. I compose everything on the acoustic. Sometimes a melody pops into my head, and I see what it can become. Other times, there's a story I want to tell, so I sit down and write it. People fascinate me, and the situations that arise in relationships. I'm self-taught, although I had a classical background in violin and music theory, which helped. I play every day, but practise in a more structured way for events or sessions. *Seasons* will be released for download this summer and we'll have the album out by August.
www.nouenle.com

CLOUDI LEWIS
STYLE… (SINGER-SONGWRITER)

I have to be in the right mood to write songs. I can never force it. I start with acoustic guitar, then the vocals. My songs – described as indie folk – are my own personal stories in musical code. I play until I like something, then sing and make it come together. I don't like obvious lyrics, so I create an atmosphere that others can relate to. I'm self-taught on guitar. I play an Ibanez AEG8E semi-acoustic. I love it for how thin it is; as I'm small, it doesn't swamp me on stage. Usually, I DI via a PA, but at intimate venues I play unplugged, which gives everything a rawer sound. When recording last year's debut EP *Casual Conversations With A Wood Pigeon* I used a selection of guitars: my Ibanez, a Tanglewood acoustic, a Gibson SG and a Fender Stratocaster. I was happy with how 'The Woods' came out. I'd had the song for a while before recording it, which gave us time to let it settle. Another of the tracks – 'Rambling' – was re-recorded at Abbey Road, after I won a session there. I prefer that version, as it's poppier, with my full band giving it a lift. I found it inspiring that we could use the same equipment as the Beatles and Pink Floyd, but when you're in a studio it's hard to think of anything else other than the task at hand. Future plans? I'm aiming to release another EP soon, and to play more gigs. I've previously supported Rachel Sermanni and Trevor Horn's band Producers and I've been on the same festival bill as Seth Lakeman and Newton Faulkner. The secret of good playing? Passion. There's nothing worse than a musician seeing it as a chore. It should be fun!
www.facebook.com/cloudilewismusic

DEREK RYAN
STYLE… (SINGER-SONGWRITER)

I play country/folk with a hint of pop and traditional Irish music, touring with my band in the UK and Ireland. Previously I was in Irish boy band D-Side, so it's been a challenge for me to establish a solo career, but I like challenges. I love country music because the songs tell a story and can be sung simply with guitar, exposing the vocal and essence of the song. I've been listening to Irish and American country music since I was young, so I find it easy to write and perform in that genre. I enjoyed recording last year's album *Country Soul*, especially writing and having an input in the production. The title track is currently my favourite, as it seems to capture the essence of the album. There's also '100 Numbers', which I wrote while living in a London bedsit. I was gigging in pubs and had lots of friends, but I missed home and my career wasn't panning out as I hoped. I play a Cort AS M5 natural, full-bodied acoustic guitar. I like its warm sound, especially for my intimate songs at our concerts. I DI through our PA. I write most of my songs on guitar. When an idea hits me I'll stick it on my phone and then I'll sit down and write, always with lyrics and music together. We meet everyone at our gigs, so I hear many stories and these give me great inspiration. I had some guitar lessons when I was younger but got bored. I self-taught from then on, using chord books from Garth Brooks and Oasis… My influences are Garth Brooks, Keith Urban, Brad Paisley and many Irish country and folk musicians. My new studio album is due shortly, and I will be back in October with a Scottish tour.
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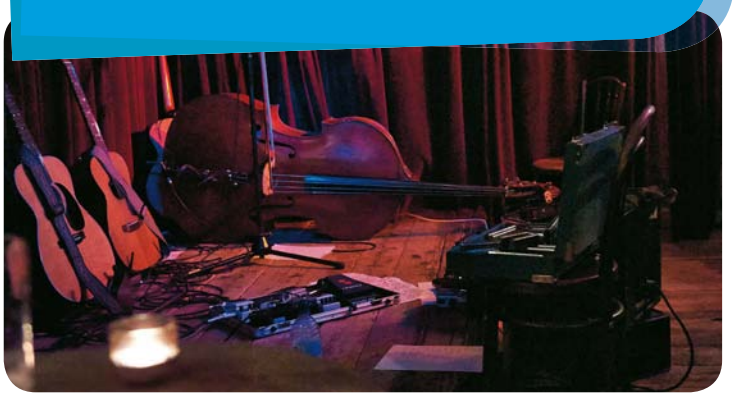


Instrument theft is an issue for all for musicians. Iggy Pop and Noah and the Whale had gear stolen, as has violinist Min-Jin Kym who had her £1.2 million Stradivarius swiped at a railway station. So how can you protect your gear?

Be prepared

Keep a short description of your instrument and equipment. Include the make, model and serial number written and ready to go. Store it separately. Make it easier for police to identify your gear by taking detailed photos of it from every angle. Focus on unusual details that make it stand out. Use a plain background, and rulers to show the size.

You may not like the idea of tagging your prized possessions with an UV pen, but it could prove worthwhile and is recommended by the police. One musician famously customised three of his violins in the colours of Aston Villa. When the £26,000 violins were stolen, they were quickly spotted on an auction site where they sold for £20 each.

Check it, cover it, lock it

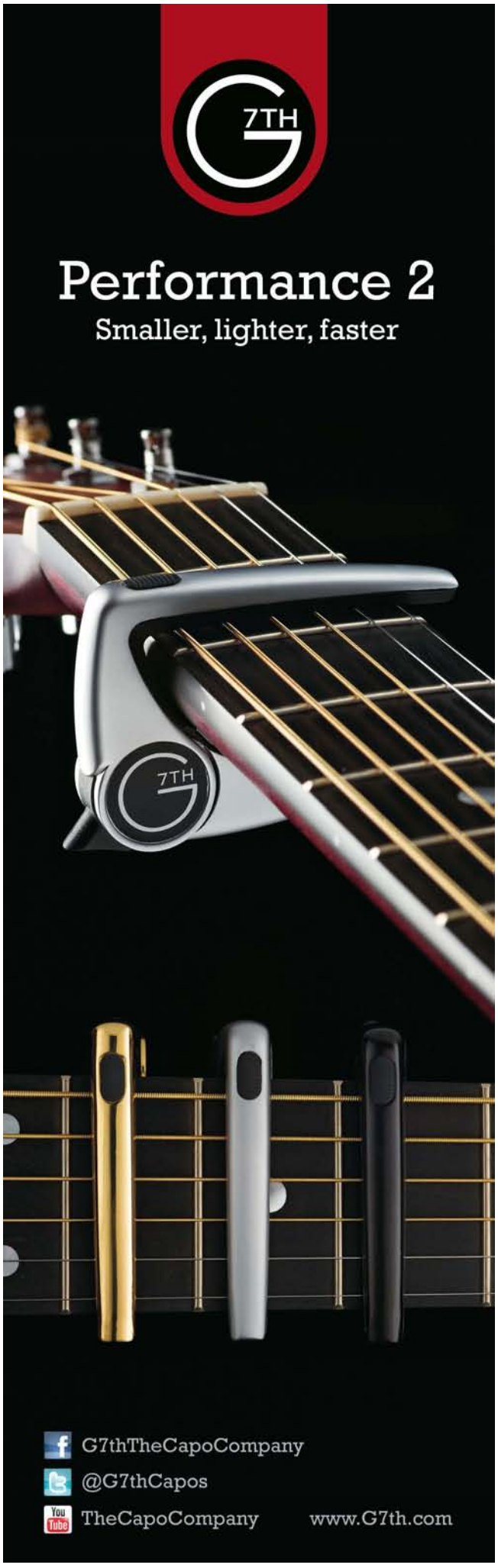
Over the years, the Union has received reports of instruments being stolen from every possible location. Double check you have locked your car or van, that your equipment is hidden from view, and that there is suitable security at the venue when on the road. Do not assume that everyone backstage is supposed to be there. Lock your gear in a room or take turns watching over it. Do not be blasé about your instrument – your livelihood – in familiar surroundings.

Act fast

Becoming a victim of theft can leave you dumbfounded but you need to act quickly as instruments often reappear for sale within 48 hours. Report the theft to the police and your insurer. MU members are entitled to £2,000 of free insurance (hencilla.co.uk).

Instrument thieves often have no idea what their treasure is worth and will head straight to second-hand dealers to sell them for a fraction of their value. Check in with local thrift stores, pawn and music shops. Give them a copy of your photographs, description and contact details. Keep an eye on eBay, Gumtree and Craigslist for suspiciously similar instruments. Harness the strong community of musicians. Tell your friends, colleagues and pot details on the MU pinboard. Spread the word on social networks: the more musicians on the lookout the better, and the moral support you'll receive will help keep you going through this difficult time. Simple steps can make all the difference finding stolen instruments.

For more ideas, £2,000 instrument/equipment insurance details, or any other questions regarding your career as a musician get in touch with us at: ***theMU.org***



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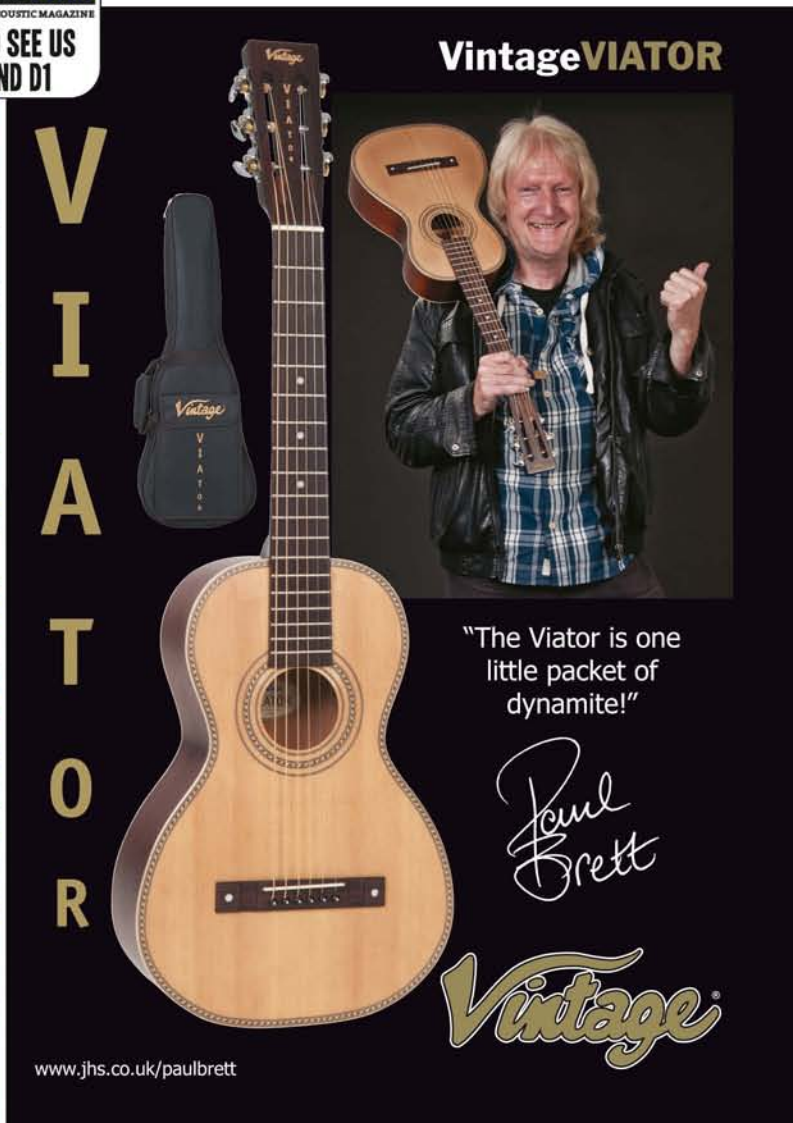

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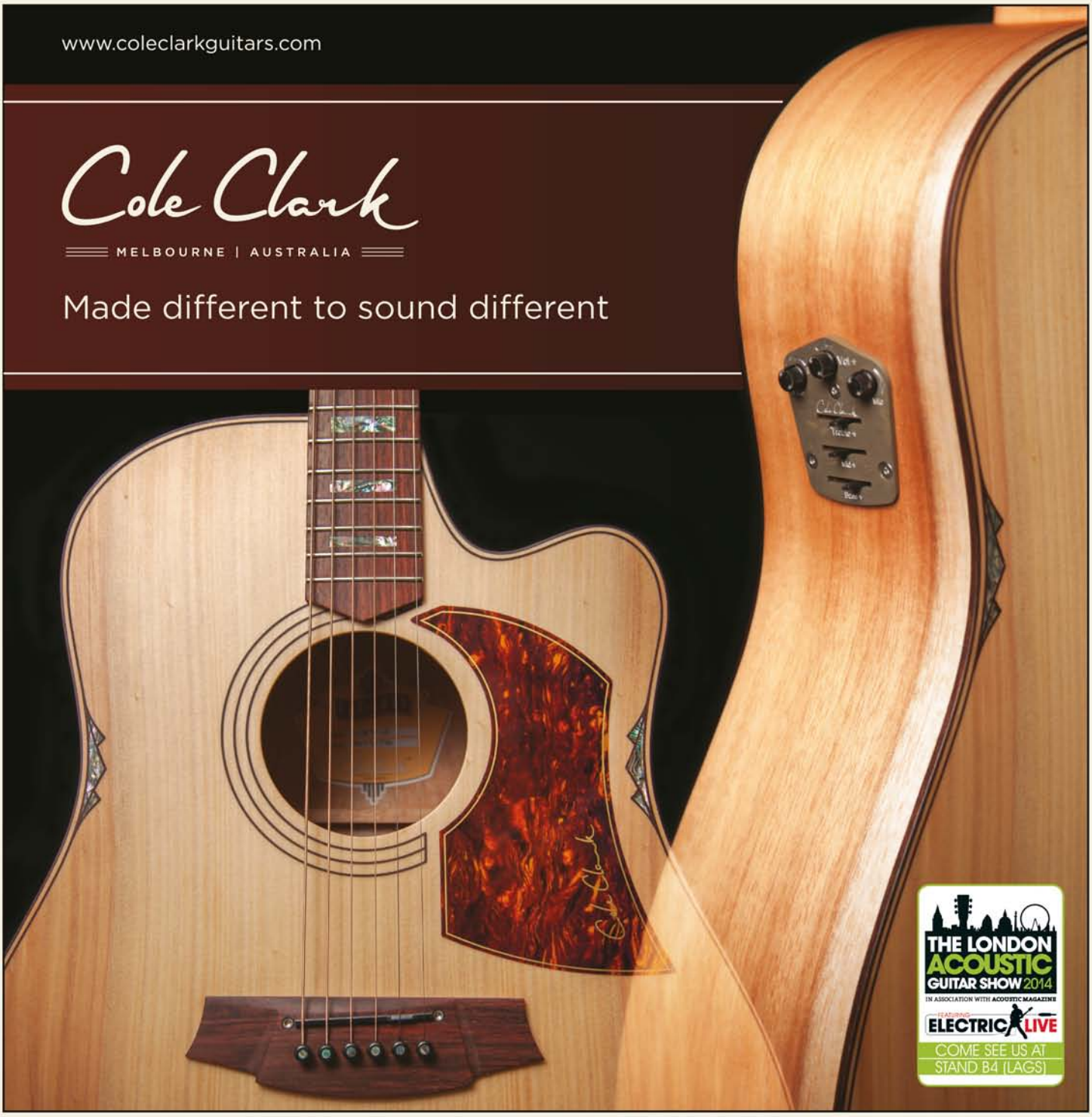
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JOHN SMITH

Andy Hughes talks to John Smith ahead of appearing at the London Acoustic Guitar Show with Elixir Strings about Great Lakes, songwriting, and Fylde guitars.

John Smith arrived in 2003 when he picked up the Young Acoustic Guitarist Of The Year Award, and has been busy steadily building his reputation, and his popularity since then.

He is a man of visual and aural contradictions – underneath his beard he is fresh-faced, but his voice sounds like a man 40 years older, a fact that John cheerfully acknowledges with an instinctive honestly that flavours this conversation, as well as his songs.

'I used to smoke a lot, and I used to drink a lot. I have had an interesting life, to the point where I don't feel like I am pretending when I sing about the things I sing about, apart from the murder ballads, because I have never killed anyone! I love Nick Cave's murder ballads; he is a real hero of mine.'

Anyone who has listened to John Smith's work cannot fail to notice the echo of John Martyn in songs like 'Winter' – it's an observation that he has heard, but does not really understand.

'People do say that to me, but it's not something I do consciously, and it's not something I can control. I have never tried to sound like John Martyn, and I would admit it if I had, because I have consciously tried to sound like Nick Drake before now. It may just be osmosis because I knew John and I toured with him for two years – or it may just be the result of smoking too many cigarettes.'

'I started out playing the piano, and the drums, and then one day when I was around 12 or 13, I picked up one of my dad's guitars, and that was it – I've played a guitar every day since then. I wasn't very good at school and I didn't have many mates, so I stayed in and just played the guitar all the time. After a year, I had the Eric Clapton *Unplugged* tablature book, and I was working my way through that. I bought any tablature book I could find with my pocket money, and I'd learn that, and then move on to another one. I also bought all the guitar magazines through my teens and worked my way through all the technical exercises.'

When it comes to his choice of guitars, John Smith looks no further than Roger Bucknall.

'I only play Fylde guitars. I have two Fylde Falstaffs, a Fylde Resonator, and a Fylde Tenor and I am having another one built at the moment. Roger Bucknall and I have spent a lot of time sampling whisky and talking about guitars. I know what whisky Roger likes, he knows what guitars I like – we have a wonderful understanding!'

Do you always plug in, or do you mic up sometimes? 'It does depend, in a large theatre I may use stand-alone mics in a bluegrass style, but all my guitars are mic'd up. I use Duncan Turner D-Tar pickups, I get a few every time I am in America, and Roger puts them in my guitars for me. Woody Mann uses them, which was where I first heard them. His sound was so amazing, so I asked what he was using, and I have never looked back. You get the pre-amp, you can split the signal, and you can EQ it yourself. I am fortunate to often work with really good sound engineers, but it is nice to have that level of control over your sound, so I can give them something complete that they can shape if they want to. A good sound engineer is worth his weight in gold.'

When the conversation turns to writing, John's honesty shines through as he describes the fear that his ability to write songs had once not only vanished, but it was showing no signs of returning any time soon. A frightening experience, then...

'It was yeah. Looking back, I realised that I was busy doing so much session work; I was just burying myself and not looking at the issues. The fact is I was just not working hard enough. If you work really hard at writing, it comes, but I think I had let it get the better of me, and let it put me off. I actually didn't write anything for about a year, and then I met up with Joe Henry who is a songwriter and producer. He and I started to write songs together, and the floodgates opened. A lot of songwriters say that you wait for the songs to drift past in the ether, and then you pluck them out of the air, and write them down. That is true, but sometimes they just don't come. I think the answer is to just write, it doesn't matter what you write, or if it is any good or not, the writing is the important thing because you are exercising that muscle, the writing muscle in your mind. If you keep that frequency tuned in right, when a song drifts past, if your antenna is out, you can catch it.'

"I know what whisky Roger likes, he knows what guitars I like – we have a wonderful understanding!

What is your quality control like? 'If it sounds like a record, then it's good enough. That may sound like a glib answer, but if a song sounds good enough to be put out, then it is good enough to be put out. You develop an instinct about these issues as you go along. Something happens somewhere along the way, it might be in the recording process, it might be in the mixing, and you know that the certain "something" that is bigger than yourself has happened to the music, and you can hear it and understand it. I have learned the cut-off point for me; I never record a song more than four times, never. And I never spend more than two days at the most mixing a song because you can just end up overthinking it. I learned that from making my first record, I spent so long mixing it; I decided not to do that again. I made my second album while I was travelling in America, and that was where I created the "four takes rule" – if it hasn't happened after four takes, then I put it on one side and come back to it another day, and try harder with it. If a song doesn't work after four takes, it's not there, it's not ready, and so it has to be shelved for the time being.'

John Smith's guitar style incorporates his delicate way of playing, combined with some tapping elements, but used with considerable restraint on the latter. John is keen to talk about both aspects of his playing.

'I grew up listening to musicians like Nick Drake, Bert Jansch and John Renbourn, and I learned from them that playing fewer notes often works better for the sound of the song, and if you are going to play a lot of notes, then you need to make sure that the song benefits from that. I love intricate guitar playing, but it can be detrimental to the song, so I love it when it is used just enough to work with the song. I do enjoy putting some tapping into my live shows and my audiences tend to like to hear it at the end of a gig, so that's when I do it. I only ever do it on one song, and it serves that song, and that's it; I wouldn't want to throw it into all the songs. There are a lot of people doing now, and it maybe is getting a bit over-used.'

It has been said that recording albums is like writing postcards – a summary of a particular time in one's career, observations of the where and when they are made. It's an analogy that John is happy to embrace.

'Absolutely, and I only wish I had more postcards in my career. I spend all my time gigging, and there is so little time at home for writing. I would like to be more prolific, I have so many ideas for records, but the songs take so long to come through; I spend years completing some songs. The song 'Town To Town' from *Great Lakes* took two years to write. 'Invisible Boy' took five years to complete.'

As a result of his talent, willingness to work, and sheer hard graft, John Smith is seeing the results of his efforts, as his albums sell in increasing quantities and his gig diary fills up, but how does he measure success?

'I don't know. I have people who come to my gigs and sit there quietly, and that is how I would measure success. For me, success is playing to slowly growing audiences who want to come and listen to what I do, so on that basis I am successful. Compared to where I was five years ago, I am able to make my living from making music. It takes a lot of maintenance and work to do this. I spend a lot of time working in an office in my house, doing things like accounts and maintaining social media, which never feels very rock and roll, but if you work for yourself as I do, then the backroom work has to be done as well. What makes me a success? I haven't thought about it. I think I would start to doubt myself if I did something like that. I sing and play the guitar, and I like people who sing and play the guitar, so I guess that's how it works for other people.'

John Smith plays The London Acoustic Guitar Show with Elixir Strings on September 13 & 14. John Smith's Great Lakes is out now. www.johnsmithjohnsmith.com

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JAKE WAS A GUITAR PLAYER. BUT THE DAY A CHEMICAL EXPLOSION TOOK HIS RIGHT ARM, PEOPLE STOPPED SEEING JAKE, THE GUITAR PLAYER, AND STARTED SEEING JAKE, THE GUY WHO LOST HIS ARM. THE PROBLEM WAS, THAT WASN'T THE JAKE HE WANTED TO BE. SO, HE MADE THE DECISION TO FIGHT FOR HIS IDENTITY—A BATTLE AGAINST STEREOTYPES, PREJUDICE AND WORST OF ALL, PITY. IT WAS AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK, BUT SOMEHOW, HE LEARNED TO PLAY ALL OVER AGAIN IN A WAY THAT COULD ONLY BE DONE WITH A SPECIAL PROSTHESIS—AND HE DIDN'T STOP THERE. EVENTUALLY HE GOT ENOUGH COURAGE TO GET BACK ON STAGE, WHERE AUDIENCES SAW SOMETHING JAKE WASN'T SURE THEY'D EVER SEE AGAIN. JAKE, THE GUITAR PLAYER. IT'S A STORY THAT INSPIRES US, AND SERVES AS A REMINDER THAT THE WORLD NEEDS MORE PEOPLE LIKE JAKE. FOR MORE ABOUT JAKE AND OTHER STORIES OF PEOPLE WITH THE COURAGE TO STEP FORWARD, *visit taylorguitars.com*

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GABRIELLE APLIN

A YouTube sensation, Gabrielle Aplin's climb to fame has been deliberately slow but, right now, as she tells Julian Piper, every day feels like a holiday...

'I really enjoy doing it, and keeping focused on your music is what it's all about. Sometimes people have a lot of success early on because they were enjoying making music for all the right reasons, then they get carried away worrying about things that didn't matter before, and it all goes wrong,' says Gabrielle Aplin, speaking from her Richmond garden on a sunny July morning. Aplin's cool logic is something you might associate with a grizzled veteran, rather than the ebullient 21-year-old fighting with her cat. 'It's why some artists don't do well the second or third time around; they loose what made them great in the first place. I've tried very hard to avoid that, and I'm lucky that I have so much to work towards, and my songs didn't go all the way to the sky the first time I released something.'

In case you've missed her (which is probably unlikely) – and given her runaway success as the voice behind John Lewis' 2012 TV ad with 'The Power Of Love' which topped the UK singles chart, and her gold album *English Rain* – Gabrielle's apprenticeship took place on camera. Like fellow YouTube "sensations", her path to fame came through the internet, and in Gabrielle's case the videos she began posting when just 14 years old. Seven years on, she's toured Australia with Ed Sheeran, supported John Mayer and has toured the States numerous times. It's the kind of success story that gives hope to every singer-songwriter in the land using YouTube – and thank heavens for that, because as we know, it's tough out there.

> *"I'm trying to keep the next album organic, just writing songs as I go along. I feel like I'm on holiday..."*

Gabrielle Aplin laughs a lot and is a treat to talk to. From the word go she's immensely likeable, with a complete lack of pretension and seemingly happy to talk about anything. In the plastic ersatz world of pop music, her openness is something that certainly couldn't have done her career any harm. She grew up in what she's described as a bit of a "hippy home" and as a 14-year-old, was fascinated by poetry – specifically T.S. Elliot – the songs of Leonard Cohen, Bruce Springsteen and Joni Mitchell.

'I wasn't obsessive, but I liked it more than other stuff; it wasn't cool to like those kind of singers then like it is now, but I knew what I liked,' she says. 'Maybe some friends might have thought it a bit weird,' she laughs, 'but I didn't live in a busy area, or go to a busy school with millions of friends. When I put my music online most of my friends didn't even know that I was doing that.'

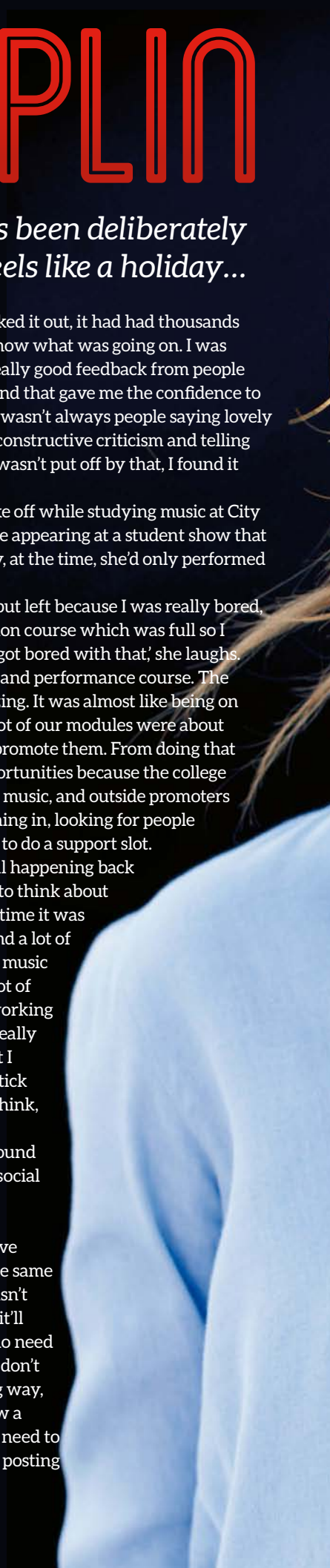
Were you surprised when your You Tube videos became so popular? 'Absolutely – I have no idea why they had so many views. I started putting up other people's songs before my own; and at that point didn't realise you could even put up songs you'd written yourself. A friend uploaded the first video just for friends and family, and then when we checked it out, it had had thousands of views, and we really didn't know what was going on. I was experimenting, but I received really good feedback from people that had been watching them, and that gave me the confidence to bring out my own songs. And it wasn't always people saying lovely things, it was people giving me constructive criticism and telling me how I could improve – but I wasn't put off by that, I found it really encouraging.'

Gabrielle's career began to take off while studying music at City Of Bath College, and it was while appearing at a student show that she met her manager. Incredibly, at the time, she'd only performed in public a few times.

'I started studying languages but left because I was really bored, then wanted to go on a production course which was full so I decided to take a year out; but I got bored with that,' she laughs. 'Eventually, I went on a writing and performance course. The college was amazing. It was almost like being on a record label; a lot of our modules were about gigs and how to promote them. From doing that I got loads of opportunities because the college promoted a lot of music, and outside promoters were always coming in, looking for people who might want to do a support slot. MySpace was still happening back then – it's funny to think about it now but at the time it was really relevant and a lot of people found my music through that. A lot of these social networking platforms work really well together, but I don't think it's good enough to stick something upon YouTube and think, "Yes, this will go viral."'

On a recent online blog, she sound frustrated with people that see social media sites as the way ahead...

'What I was doing was quite transparent, but a lot of artists I've worked with have tried to do the same thing, then wondered why it hasn't worked for them. Just thinking it'll happen regardless, and there's no need to do anything else, is no good. I don't think there's any right or wrong way, but after all this time there's now a kind of social etiquette that you need to conform to. When I first started posting



videos I didn't really notice, but later on I could see there was this group of people who kept coming back and watching everything I did. I really wanted to get through to these people because I knew they were my potential audience, but of course had no idea who they really were. I kept talking to them, and later when I met my manager, we put together a small UK tour, to see if all this could translate into the real world. I was really terrified there'd be only eight people at a hundred capacity show, but to my surprise they all sold out. It was one of those moments when I thought: "Yes, we really might be able to do this." I recorded my first EP, put it on iTunes and everything just kept building with more and more tours.'

By the time Gabrielle's debut album *English Rain* was released in 2013, her fans must have been hot with anticipation. After all, 30 million of them had been watching her songs for six years. But with its gentle understated folky feel and leanings towards Nick Drake, she finally became of age, delivering a set of songs like the gently rocking 'Please Don't Say You Love Me', offering just the kind of homely advice a young 14-year-old, beset by teenage angst might welcome. It couldn't fail. Pictured on the cover wearing a diaphanous dress whirling an umbrella in the air, it is a very English kind of image, suggesting a singer rooted in a classic female Sandy Denny folk singer mould. Yet the video that accompanies the latest version of 'Home' is shot in the American desert.

'Yes, it's very Americana!' she exclaims. 'When we were making the video we started in LA and made our way across the desert to Reno; it was like a little road trip, staying in small motels and making the film as we were actually travelling. But that song was an old one that was on my first EP. We made a video at the time but didn't have any money or a record label; in my head I always had it in mind for it to look as it finally did, like a late '70s film. It was the first time I'd been to America and it was an incredible experience, which

for the video worked out really well; it was important to feel as though I was away from home and I was out of my comfort zone.'

You've done a few big tours - Australia and New Zealand with Ed Sheeran and more recently supported John Mayer.

'He [Mayer] chose me for the tour, and from the first night really made an effort to make me feel welcome. He was really nice; we'd never met before and I'd heard so many stories about him that I didn't know what to expect, but he was great and his fans were amazing. We were well looked after and it was just great to learn from someone who's performing at that level.'

Equally happy playing with just her C.F. Martin & Co. 000-15M, she admits she loves the energy of playing with her band, but also likes the ease and spontaneity of her solo shows.

'I did two weeks in America in May, did the whole thing solo; it was weird but also nice not to have to worry about set lists, and be able to make up my sets as I went along,' she admits.

With a delicate guitar style that owes much to Joni Mitchell, Gabrielle, who's self taught, began playing guitar in standard tuning but gradually moved to open tunings. Her favourite guitar is her 000-15M which she describes as "really warm sounding" (*check out our review over on page 58*) and admits to hating having to change strings. I tell her that Eric Clapton is also a guitarist that shies away from that expensive habit.

'I believe it, it sounds muddy but I love it because I hate that bright sound you get when you change strings. If I do break a string, then I just change that particular one. It's like Chinese cooks who don't wash their woks – they just wipe them out!'

'It's been strange, I've only recently started playing in standard tuning again; I stopped because my hands are so small I couldn't manage barre chords,' she giggles. 'I began messing around in dropped D, then got in the habit of tuning one or two strings down to see what happened... I think,' she laughs. 'I play in D, but sometimes, if I'm writing a song, it's interesting to change back to standard tuning; it can completely change a song's feeling – and vice versa. I really like listening to Feist's guitar playing. She plays in a way that doesn't look like she's ever been taught by geniuses, but has something that's completely her own thing; even if I could play like her, there's no way I would sound the same. But I've always tried to develop my own style of playing and singing. I love Nick Drake and can copy his style, but there's now way I'll ever really sound the same.'

Currently working on a new album, Gabrielle is in the enviable position of being funded by her record label and recording at a friend's house.

'I'm trying to keep it very organic, writing as I go along; Parlophone just told me to get on with it and sent me on my way; it's amazing ! I feel as though I'm on holiday all the time.'

Gabrielle Aplin plays the main stage of the London Acoustic Guitar Show on Saturday 13 September 2014.
www.gabrielleaplin.co.uk

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JON GOMM

WORDS: DAVID MEAD IMAGES: TINA KORHONEN

The Cinderella story of Jon Gomm's rise to international acclaim is already a legend among players seeking their fortune on the highways and byways of the internet. Once a busy musician playing clubs and pubs across the UK, the YouTube video of his tune 'Passionflower' and a single syllable appraisal – "Wow!" – posted on Twitter from no less than Stephen Fry helped propel him into the six string stratosphere. Now, busier than ever, this fiercely independent musician took time out from a hectic schedule to talk to us in advance of his appearance at this year's London Acoustic Guitar Show...

First of all, can you outline the history of your faithful Lowden – Wilma – for us?

I'd been to see singer-songwriter Nick Harper and I decided I needed that sound: big. The acoustic version of a wall of Marshalls. He was using a Lowden, so I looked them up and I couldn't afford one. So I started searching through the classified ads in the back of a guitar magazine for a second-hand one. There weren't any. I didn't realise that these are handmade instruments and therefore kind of rare. I checked the previous month's issue's classifieds. Still none. Two hours later and I'd been through my whole stack of magazines until eventually I found one in a two-year-old issue. I called the number and unbelievably the guy still had it! I asked him where he lived and he was in Winchester, which is quite a long way from Leeds and I didn't have a car. Later that day my dad phoned me. I asked him what he was up to and he mentioned that he was going to Winchester the next day on business. So there you have it. Fate.

What makes her special for you as a player?

Lowden's have magical powers. George Lowden basically reinvented the way acoustic guitars are built. The bracing pattern in particular is completely different. He opened up the guitar, let it breathe and so revealed all this warm mid-range tone that had previously only been heard from classical guitars. I don't think people realise that this humble Northern Irishman is probably the most revered luthier of the last half-century. American luthier Ervin Somogyi – who wrote the textbook on modern guitar building and whose guitars are sold for six figure sums – when he met George for the first time, he got down on his knees before him. He literally knelt on the ground. Wilma is particularly special for me because I've been experimenting with percussive stuff on her for 14 years, so the top is worn all over in different ways. So I have all these textures to play with. Also, she's beautiful.

"Lowdens have magical powers. I've been experimenting with percussive stuff on Wilma for 14 years..."

What inspired you to install banjo tuners?

I first saw Billy Connolly do these retuning tricks on banjo when I was a kid. Then I remember seeing Adrian Legg for the first time, using the same trick on guitar. Adrian being Adrian, he wrote all about these tuning pegs and how they worked and where to get them. So I got some! They're called Keith Pegs and are handmade in Woodstock, NY, by Bill Keith. I have my own way of using them; for me it's my way of getting the pitch-bend sounds guys like Jeff Beck and Steve Vai get on electric guitar. You can't get acoustic guitars with whammy bars. Actually, Richie Sambora did get Martin Guitars to build him one; I saw it, it's hanging on the wall of the Hard Rock Cafe in Lisbon, Portugal. The fact that it's hanging on a wall tells you everything you need to know about how well it worked, I think!

Looking at your pedal board, it's more what we'd expect from a rock player – could you give us a guided tour?

Actually, electric guitarists look at my board with complete bafflement too! There are only four effects on there: Boss's OC3 Super Octave (which I totally started and now everyone's using it – I should have painted it so nobody could see what it was!) overdrive, delay and reverb. The rest of the pedals are to tweak and blend the sound of my three pickups. So there are three parametric EQ pedals and a Line Selector which is Boss's Swiss army knife A/B/Y blend/split pedal. Parametric EQ on each pickup is amazing for me. Some guitarists actually send their two or three pickups separately to the sound engineer and then expect the engineer to mix them, which is nuts to me. How is a sound engineer supposed to know how your pickups sound and how to EQ and blend them?

How did your multi pickup system evolve?

Slowly! The one pickup that's been constant is the Fishman Rare Earth humbucker, which is warm and fat and responds really well to effects, too. Also, because it's magnetic it only hears the strings and is completely deaf to the percussion. This is great for mixing your overall sound. For about 10 years I've been using the Rare Earth Blend which has a microphone attached, which again is just fabulous, the best internal guitar mic I've tried – and I've tried a lot. I also have one more pickup, a sensor – a stick-on transducer. There are millions of these available; I use one made by Carlos Juan called The Sly. It's super-sensitive and gorgeous.

Do you still use an acoustic amp when playing live or is it strictly PA these days?

I use a Trace Acoustic TA200, which is basically like a tiny PA, as my backline amp and onstage monitor. It's completely clean and really adjustable, too. It's completely redesigned from their classic amps from 20 years ago by a British amp builder called Paul Stevens. He knows everything that anyone has ever known about amps and he's come up with inspired new ideas on top of that.

Have you ever experimented with MIDI?

How dare you!

Moving on to technique now – have you always played acoustic or did you start with electric?

I started out with a three quarter size classical guitar when I was four. My teacher was a classical and flamenco guitarist, but I spent a lot of time playing songs, particularly Beatles songs from a songbook my uncle brought me back from holiday in Spain, which had Spanish guitar arrangements of their songs. I got into electric guitar pretty soon after that and through my teens and early 20s that was my main focus. I went to The Guitar Institute for three years, studying every kind of electric guitar playing known to man. But I was starting to lean towards acoustic more and by the time I moved to Leeds to study jazz at Leeds College of Music I was really getting into contemporary acoustic stuff and experimenting with wacky techniques.

Who were your principal influences in the beginning?
I've been through so many phases as a guitarist; it's hard to find a beginning as such! One thing that really influenced me a lot was going to gigs as a kid. You can only learn so much about being a musician from listening to records, even from watching videos. Being in a room with musicians, feeling the air vibrating with the sounds they're making is so different. I used to go to gigs with my dad a lot, mostly blues gigs. So there'd be this room full of middle-aged blues fans and this one 10-year-old kid! After a while, my dad got to know all these musicians and they'd start staying over at his house after the gig to save paying for a hotel. So we'd have his house in Blackpool full of hairy American bluesmen every weekend. Walter Trout was my favourite, he was so funny, he'd show me how to play his licks, but also how to pull faces and stuff. "Hey Jaaaahn, you know when I make that face like this [screws up face and sticks out lips]? You know what I'm doing? I'm trying to fart so loudly that the audience can hear it over the music!" And Bob Brozman, he really got me into guitar drumming. Man, he was so great, just an extraordinary guitarist. He took his own life last year and the circumstances were pretty horrific; the fact that he used to stay over at my place when I was a kid... well it's been hard for me to come to terms with.

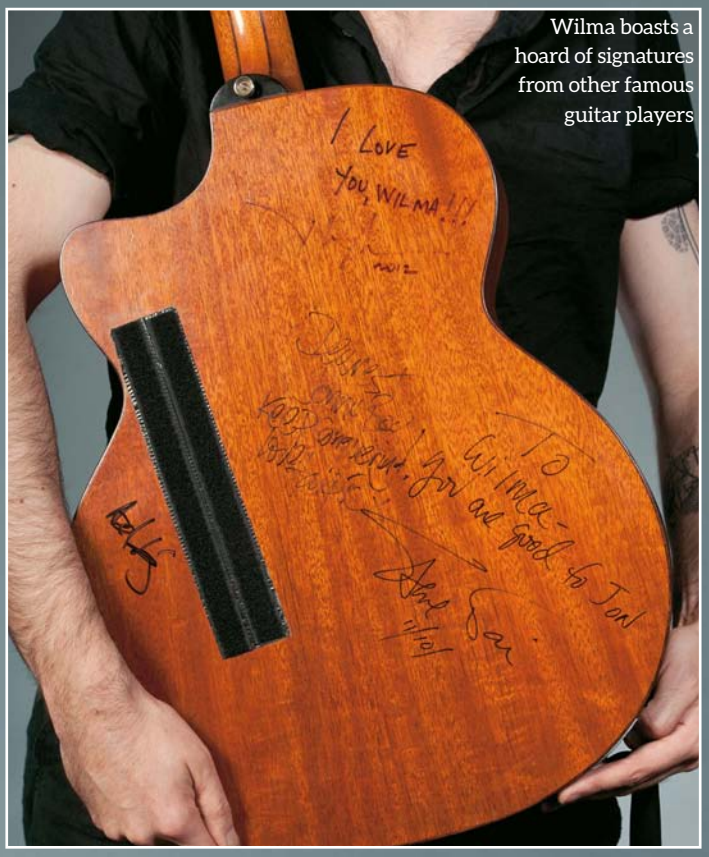
Have you favourite tunings that you like to explore?
No. That would defeat the whole point of altered tunings for me. When I was a kid, I was in a band with my best friend Michael and I was already pretty good – I could play loads of scales, I could play loads of cool fast licks, pretty damn awesome. Michael could barely play, he'd taken about two lessons and couldn't play in time; he was a Neanderthal guitarist. But when it came to composing, all my guitar riffs sounded kind of generic and boring, but his sounded really original and cool. I couldn't figure it out – I had all this skill and knowledge, he didn't. Damn! Finally I realised – when I looked down at my guitar I could see all the places where my fingers were allowed to go, all the patterns and pathways. But when my friend looked at his guitar, it was just a blank page, the only tool he had, but therefore the only limit he had, was his imagination. By retuning my guitar, all those patterns disappeared and I could experience that creative freedom and compose without my fingers taking over.

The winds of change have been howling through the music industry over the past few years. Some have thrived, others are struggling. How do you think independent artists should adapt to the current music environment?
We independent artists shouldn't really have

to adapt, we're the ones who've built this new world online. It's the mainstream industry that is adapting. I've always been independent. The mainstream music industry is a cutthroat and shallow place. I've seen so many musician friends get screwed over, screwed out of money or even worse, screwed out of being able to make their art. Sometimes the musicians start caring too much about the wrong stuff, like how many albums they've sold. I have no idea how many albums I've sold and I run my own record label! I could look it up; I just don't care. I know my overall revenue and how that's going. I can't be bothered breaking it down every month or whatever. And now the corporate industry is trying to copy the independent model. Using social networks for promotion, using Pay What You Want or other revenue structures. To be honest, they still haven't figured out any way to deal with piracy. They still want all music lovers who file-share to get prosecuted.

It's amazing how many independent artists have a mainstream attitude to certain things though, it's really frustrating to me! I have friends, independent and not, who are aghast when they find out their album has been downloaded 10,000 times on Pirate Bay or whatever. They don't see it as a way of spreading their music and getting more fans and more income. And I say to them: "But you put your videos on YouTube. That's free. Nobody pays for that and it has the added value of a video! So what are you complaining about?" And they say, "Yes but I chose to put my videos there" or "Yes but that's advertising" or "Yes but that has different audio" or "Yes but you can't download from YouTube..." which of course any kid knows how to do, if that even matters. How is a music fan supposed to know that even though you gave them your music for free on YouTube, they shouldn't take it for free from another place? Did you ever take the time to explain the difference? Do you have a strategy for it at all?

So many independent artists just stick their music anywhere, too. I'm not on Spotify, because the revenue is pathetic and it's part owned by major labels and run really for their benefit, so they can monetize back catalogue and I hate that. If an independent artist has made an informed choice to put their music on Spotify, I totally respect that. But if they've just put it there, just because it exists, so it must be OK right? I can't understand that. It's frustrating! That's why I hit my guitar, probably.



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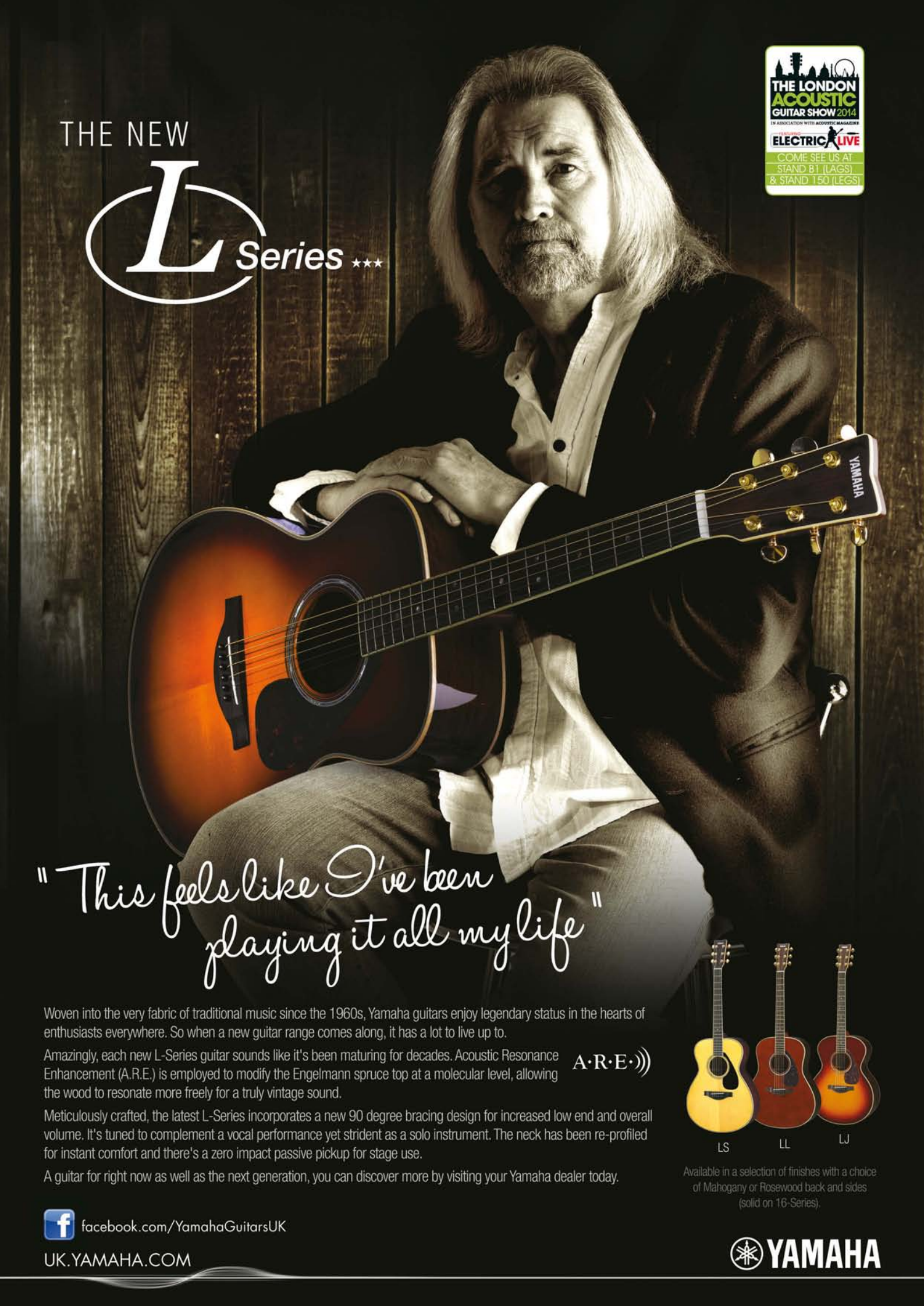
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A REDESIGN FOR LIFE

Following 2013's introspective ***Rewind The Film****, James Dean Bradfield & co return with twelfth studio album* ***Futurology*** *flanked by a European sensibility and new edge. With a seamless reinvention,* ***Rewind The Film's*** *successor is unmistakably Manics, but not like before…*

WORDS: GUY LITTLE IMAGES: RICHARD ECCLESTONE

It was 1990, the Manics had just recorded their first EP *The New Art Riot* for Heavenly Records, soon to be followed by two, now career-defining singles, 'Motown Junk' and 'You Love Us'. Shouting political rhetoric with a defiant middle finger to anyone and everyone, the Manic Street Preachers had arrived, emerging from their hometown of Blackwood, Wales, as self-styled "generation terrorists." With antagonistic attitudes and androgynous band members, the Welsh quartet released their debut album *Generation Terrorists* in 1992 with an overly optimistic sense of grandeur fueled by their claim it would outsell Guns N' Roses' *Appetite For Destruction* and shift more than 16 million copies. (Listen to album opener 'Slash and Burn'… James Dean Bradfield channeling Guns riffs aplenty, right?)

Claiming they would disband after *Generation Terrorists,* it soon became clear when a cover of 'Suicide Is Painless (Theme from M*A*S*H)' became their first Top 10 hit, that they would continue. They went on to release *Gold Against The Soul* (1993) and *The Holy Bible* (1994).

Following the disappearance of rhythm guitarist and lyricist Richey Edwards in 1995, the Manic Street Preachers returned with *Everything Must Go* in 1996, preceded by the number two single 'A Design For Life.' *Everything Must Go* didn't just go multi-platinum – it established the Manics as bona fide superstars.

Their self consciously dangerous image, leftist leanings, crunching hard rock and outsider status made them favourites of the British music press and helped them build a dedicated following.

Fast-forward to 2011, and having just released a singles collection, *National Treasures*, the band plugged away in the studio, working on an ambitious project tentatively titled *70 Songs of Hatred and Failure*. They soon realised they'd written too much material before deciding to release two very different albums. The first, a folky, almost entirely acoustic, emotionally raw effort entitled *Rewind The Film* (a remarkably understated success, featuring collaborations with Richard Hawley and Lucy Rose) appeared in 2013, and the second, *Futurology*, is fresh off the press and receiving some of the best praise the Manics have had in their 28-year career. Despite the albums being almost polar opposites, the material was recorded at the same time in their Faster studio, Cardiff; Monmouthshire's Rockfield Studios; and Hansa Studios, Berlin – a studio which claims U2's *Achtung Baby*, and many albums from David Bowie (interestingly, one of Bowie's most notable albums *Heroes* was recorded there, and was also his twelfth) among its work.

Throughout their near-three-decade career, Manic Street Preachers have developed a rare power to constantly progress, reinvent, and, crucially, stay relevant. With more than 40 singles and 12 studio albums, they have carved out an enduring career fuelled by their apprehension of the norm, and Bradfield's anthemic guitar riffs, making them one of the most beloved rock bands of recent times.

Nearly a quarter of a century after *Generation Terrorists,* who knew that the fiery rockers from Wales would become such an institution in the music industry? All the while without ever adhering to the mainstream and without losing any of that initial fire that made them such a dangerous, often outspoken, outfit. Times have changed, though, and *Futurology* defines the Manics' adaptability, and their desire to redress their musical boundaries, this time channeling Krautrock influences.

James Dean Bradfield, although best known for his chunky guitar riffs and melodic Slash-inspired Les Paul soloing (think 'Motorcycle Emptiness', 'La Tristesse Durera') is no stranger to a Gibson J45, a Taylor 600 series, and one of Roger Bucknall's

Gibson

Fyldes. Bradfield notably played the BBC's Songwriters' Circle armed with his Taylor – and the morning after our interview, the trio (Nicky Wire, Sean Moore, James Dean Bradfield) is set to do something similar on BBC Radio 2's breakfast show before heading to Scotland for T in the Park, and then to Benicassim the following weekend.

After a triumphant release week for *Futurology*, we met up with Bradfield to talk guitars and songwriting – oh, and Guns N' Roses.

James Dean Bradfield cuts a small figure, dressed casually in jeans and a blazer, and, like many players, he looks a little lost without a guitar in his hands. Busying himself by emptying his pockets of his mobile phone, Marlborough Lights, and some loose change, he quickly grabs his Gibson J45 (a 1971 model) and steps into shot for our photographer.

'Taking drugs was never a bad habit of mine – it was buying too many guitars,' he quips, posing in a studio somewhere in Soho, London. 'I can't buy them now, though – I've got a wife and kid.'

The Manics are enjoying an Indian summer of creativity and, at the time of the interview, *Futurology* was sitting comfortably at number two in the mid-week album charts. 'That's if we're not shafted by Dolly Parton,' Bradfield laughs. 'That's not something I thought I'd say... I think she's still riding the Glastonbury wave.' The Manics weren't shafted by Dolly, and *Futurology* charted at number two – their highest-charting record in seven years.

'It's a nice feeling though; it's the second album we've released in the space of a year. It's good to know we're still in the game. We're not deluded, you know? We know we're not the band that sells as many records as we did on *Everything Must Go*

and *This Is My Truth Tell Me Yours*. We've never had a midlife crisis; being in a band keeps that at bay,' he laughs.

Claiming, nonchalantly, that one of the Manics' biggest hits ('If You Tolerate This Your Children Will Be Next') is "just five or so simple chords", he shrugs off any prowess that I hinted at. It's about what you do with the chords that matters, though. He's sitting picking away guitar licks and detuning (by ear) throughout the interview, punctuated only by a few mouthfuls of Coca Cola and a couple of Marlboroughs. I've only ever heard one other player solo (in a rock music medium) on an acoustic the way that he's doing right now – Slash.

Bradfield is a huge Slash fan, but we've not brought the subject up just yet. Firstly, I need to get his attention as he's currently playing the naughty schoolboy by hanging out of the window to get his nicotine rush.

'Is that a bit o' 'Civil War'?' he says, stubbing out his cigarette, as I play the intro to the Guns N' Roses track on his J45. 'Try and do any of *Appetite For Destruction* on acoustic, and it's fucking hard. He [Slash] does gigs with Myles [Kennedy, vocalist] and plays it all acoustically, and it's perfect. It astounds me. He must've been using 8s or 9s [strings] – if he wasn't, that's depressing!'

'A bad review hurts you just as much as the joy a good review gives you,' he equals, when I mentioned the rave reviews *Futurology* has been receiving this week. Rough Trade hosted an in-store the evening before our interview, in which the Manics treated 200 fans to *Futurology* and *The Holy Bible* tracks. Bradfield has played the record store many times in the past, often with his acoustic, including when *Generation Terrorists* was released in 1992.

'In terms of being in a band, I didn't feel I had to go and play record shops back in the 90s. When an opportunity comes through now to do something at a record store, it actually feels more pressing and that there's something you can do. Not that playing a gig there will save them, but there's something more symbolic there. I've always supported record shops, simply because I love buying records – and that's the best way to support them.'

> *"I very rarely buy a guitar if I try it and it doesn't feel manageable immediately. You've got to make a connection with a guitar straight away..."*

With 11 festival gigs left to go this summer, Bradfield is reminiscing about some past – although we're not mentioning Glastonbury, despite a monumental set of "hit after hit" as described by the BBC at this year's bash. 'Some festivals do annoy me,' he quips. 'You'll have some amazing live music playing, and then there are people only bothered with roasted fucking vegetables on a food stall playing Bombay Bicycle Club through a shitty radio...'

The Manics head to T in the Park the day after our interview, and he's still not got a set list. Funnily enough, it took the Manics 10 albums (and countless hits) before feeling comfortable with their live sets.

'Up until *Postcards From A Young Man*, we never felt as if we had enough songs to do a balanced set. We always felt like we were struggling to put together a really balanced set list. It wasn't until we were doing the *Rewind The Film* tour that we actually felt that we had enough songs between singles and classic album tracks to choose from – which was weird for a band on its eleventh album. Now, we do feel that we can represent so many different periods of the band within a set list.'

'I think when you choose to play a song acoustically, you pick one that obviously connects with people, but also one that's quite simple in its construction. Slash is one of the only guitars players who can sit down and play electric parts on an acoustic and not fuck it up. Transferring your electric sensibility to an acoustic one is a notoriously hard thing to do. I look for something that I can strip back to its barest bones and it still communicates the essence of the song. Most music I've written with the Manics has been on acoustic guitar. Strangely, even *The Holy Bible*, which is bizarre because it is really riff-based. [Another Slash similarity as he, when asked about *Appetite For Destruction*, claims he wrote many of the tracks with his acoustic.] It was written on an acoustic back in my parents' house in Wales. By then, I had the confidence to write a riff on an acoustic guitar and I knew that it would transfer to an electric guitar.'

The guitar he's referring to here is a Fender F-5-12. With a puzzled look, I ask why he'd choose a 12-string as one of his first guitars. 'I know, right? I still play a full take on a 12-string and go "aaah"', he answers, shaking his left hand in the air, mimicking the pain of grappling with a 12er.

In an organised turn of events, Bradfield pulls out his glasses and reads from a list he's prepared noting his entire acoustic guitar collection, complete with dates and notable tracks each guitar was used on.

'I could get quite emotional about this, but I won't,' he says, unfolding the A4 sheet. 'My mum and dad bought me the Fender as an eighteenth birthday present. I still use it on lots of records – it's got a Guns N' Roses sticker on it, too,' he laughs. 'It was all over *Generation Terrorists* and even *The Holy Bible*, tucked away on one of the tracks. It was on *Send Away The Tigers, Journal For Plague Lovers*... It was £100; my parents bought it from a local club act. I remember sitting in the front room of the house and my mum and dad had parked the car opposite the front door and they walked across with this guitar case. It was amazing – they had gone and bought a "proper" guitar. I saw it and thought, "That's amazing", but then I tried to play it and thought, "Oh shit!" After about a month, the strength in my left hand was getting there and it was a really good exercise actually. My first guitar was a Les Paul copy electric which was really bad, but if you keep playing on a bad guitar, when you play on a good one you'll be much better than you expect after the tough love of the bad one.'

Bradfield's guitar inventory makes for envious reading. As well as his 1973 Gibson J45, he's got a Gibson L (bought for around £300 by Manics' drummer, Sean Moore), a Lakewood D12, a Guild JF65-12 with flamed maple sides and spruce top, a Cole Clark Fat Lady, Cole Clark Angel, a Taylor 414CE and Taylor 614CE (Bradfield uses the Taylors and Cole Clarks for live work due to their pickup systems), a Crafter archtop with a Kent Armstrong lipstick pickup and L.R. Baggs Element, and a Fylde Orsino which he uses for all lead work. His J45 (bought from Fat Rick's in Fulham in 1997) is "his most trusted" guitar, though, and the one with which he wrote the Manics' number

one singles, 'If You Tolerate This Your Children Will Be Next' and 'The Masses Against The Classes'.

'I was supposed to meet my guitar tech at Fat Rick's one morning but I'd gotten absolutely hammered the night before – properly drunk, you know? Still drinking in China Town at 4am drunk... I went in at 9.30am and I felt horrible. The J45 was the most money I'd spent on a guitar in a long time because I think *Everything Must Go* was doing very well and, er, I was still drunk. I played it and remember just thinking, "Oh, that sounds amazing". I bought it and then very quickly wrote 'If You Tolerate This Your Children Will Be Next'. I very rarely buy a guitar if I try it and it doesn't feel manageable immediately. You've got to make a connection with a guitar straight away.'

'I bought the Fylde from Forsyth's in Manchester, which is a great store – I'd be so depressed if that ever closed down. The next time I went into Forsyth's they asked how I got on with it, and the Fylde has subsequently been on just about every record since, for all of the lead stuff. It's a very clear sounding guitar, which is why I chose it for that job. The Cole Clarks just came about by serendipity, I guess. We'd done an Australian tour in 2010 and a guy turned up who was a designer for Cole Clark and gave me two free guitars – which is always nice. It's kind of like someone telling you that they love you! Actually, I really liked them because of the pickups in them – they definitely fill a gap. They're great for live playing, and have lots of warmth. If a guitar's got warmth, you can always build on that. I used them a lot on *Rewind The Film* for tracking on some songs. A little secret weapon, you know? The Lakewood I bought when we were just starting to record *Generation Terrorists* and Steve Brown [engineer] wanted me to track some of my electrics with an acoustic. He made me go to a shop in Guildford and we only had a certain budget, but he thought that guitar sounded good. Again, I've used it throughout my career. Sometimes, it'll stay in the lockup, but then I'll think, "I'll give the old Lakewood a go". I've got no snobbery about guitars; I got lucky with the J45, it is my best acoustic, but the Fylde definitely brings up the rear. Although you can just get so lucky with an acoustic guitar which costs next to nothing.'

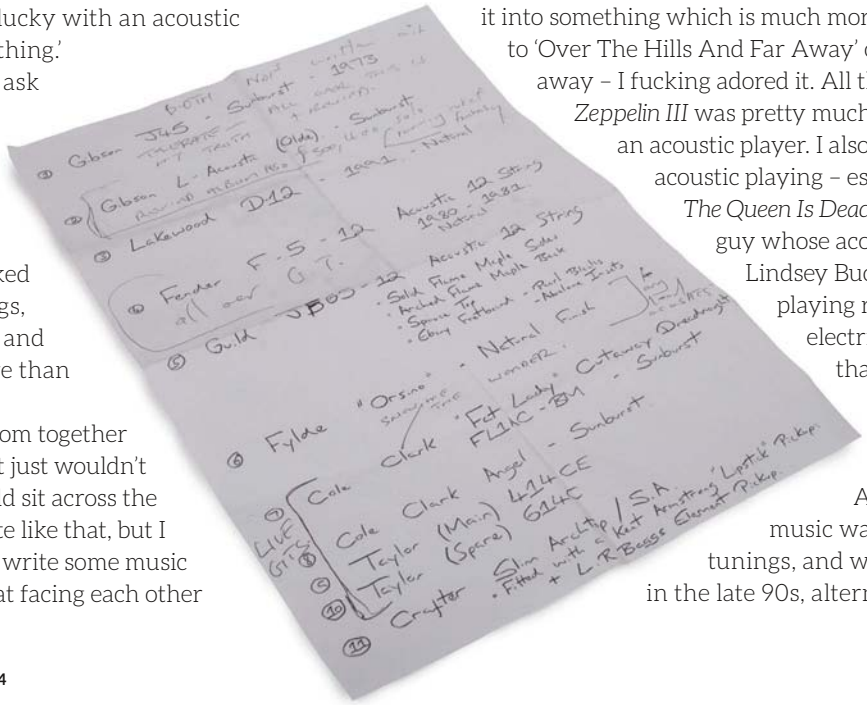
> *"If the sense of wonder is no longer there, then don't do it. Why would I want to stop being in the Manics? It's what I've always wanted to do and I still love it..."*

Bradfield smirks a little as I ask him about his appearance on the BBC's The One Show the evening before our interview. Something tells me he'd rather have been elsewhere, but when they asked him about how he writes songs, the look Nicky (Wire, bassist) and he exchanged gave away more than any words could.

'We'd never sit down in a room together and go, "Dm7, yeah, that's it". It just wouldn't happen. Nick and Richey would sit across the table from each other and write like that, but I never could. Sean and I would write some music together but we'd still not be sat facing each other – he'd be around the house or something, we'd just in orbit of each other. We all couldn't be closer [Bradfield has known Nicky since five, Sean since he was two] but I just couldn't do that trade off thing. A lot of stuff I've written from Nick and Richey's lyrics has just come from me absolutely loving them and then it bringing something out musically. 'Europa Geht Durch Mich' [*Futurology*] was a bit like a 'Faster' [*The Holy Bible*] moment because I kept looking at the lyrics and with 'Faster' I went through 20 drafts of the music to get the song and in the end it's so simple, but it's all about the riff. I looked at 'Europa' and just knew that after five attempts at the music I was trying to overcomplicate it and I just left it alone for a bit and knew that it just was going to come and be four chords – and it was.'

Enduring political passion and new musicality penetrates *Futurology*, and Bradfield couldn't be happier that it's something of a redesign from the norm. It's still the Manics, though, and they're still roaring what they care about (culture, alienation, boredom, and despair) but call it what you want, it's just testament to their persistent desire to make music that matters, and that's relevant – only this time with a Teutonic narrative.

'We've always been a strange bunch of people and I think that's represented in how many different turns we've taken in the band. We're obsessed with sport, and it definitely wasn't fashionable for indie kids to be into that! *Futurology* is a new version of us and I think that stems from when we formed the band – my biggest inspirations were The Clash, Guns, and Public Enemy. Richey was into Killing Joke, Sean was into Kraftwerk, and Nick was into Whitesnake and Rush. We all started feeding off each other's influences and it's not simple to try and represent all of that. A lovely electric track sounds so great when there's an acoustic tracking really tightly. I think that's one of the most undersold aspects of what an acoustic guitar can do if you're in a rock band. Obviously, The Eagles used to do it a lot. Also Led Zeppelin. I loved Jimmy Page's acoustic playing because it was slightly unhinged. There's something about him that welcomes a certain messiness in his playing and he won't be self-conscious about it, but then he'll tighten up and turn it into something which is much more melodic. The intro to 'Over The Hills And Far Away' captured me straight away – I fucking adored it. All the stuff over *Led Zeppelin III* was pretty much tutelage for me as an acoustic player. I also loved Johnny Marr's acoustic playing – especially later on with *The Queen Is Dead*. Ben Watts is another guy whose acoustic playing I love. Lindsey Buckingham, too – his playing really complements his electric playing; so I suppose that's the thing for me. I love electric guitar players who have that acoustic sensibility.'



A lot of the Manics' music was written in alternate tunings, and when writing in France in the late 90s, alternate tunings saved

Gibson

Bradfield from a bout of writer's block that threatened to leave him unable to ever "write another fucking tune again."

'I'm no good at remembering them,' he says picking up the J45, detuning it and playing some tracks from the 1998 album *This Is My Truth Tell Me Yours*. 'The strings might snap but let's do this,' he laughs as he plays 'My Little Empire'. I remember being really bored on *This Is My Truth* because I was trying to come up with one of a lot of songs and I'd been round the houses; we were in France and I thought I'd never write another fucking tune again. I gave it one last shot, and I messed around with the tuning which made the chords more inspirational to me and I came up with 'My Little Empire'. The usual way, isn't it?' he questions, strumming the open chords to the song. 'They [alternate tunings] make the moment come alive when you try to write. Open G is one I use a lot too. I remember trying to write 'Tsunami' with that oriental reference point. I was just messing around with the G and nothing was coming out and I had this inkling that if I changed the top string, something would happen. I tuned the top E [a D in open G tuning] to C because I heard the echo sound in my head and then the music for 'Tsunami' came out of that. It's not something you can learn, it's not innate – it's just messing around with it. I was there on my half day in France, so pissed off that I hadn't written another tune for the record, and I'd been playing guitar for four hours – if you're not bored after four hours, you've passed a certain test. If you really love playing guitar and if you play for four hours then something will happen – perhaps you've not got to be married or have kids at the time,' he jokes. 'I was lucky enough to have those years when I could just play music for four hours and wait for things to come – and enjoy it. Now things have to come a little quicker because I've got a more rounded life, thankfully, otherwise I'd be a psychopath. Just write the tunings down – there's a track on *Rewind The Film* called 'Manorbier' and I can't remember the tuning. If someone can listen to that and work it out for me that'd be fucking great,' he laughs.

> *"At the time, the J45 was the most money I'd spent on a guitar in a long time because I think Everything Must Go was doing very well and, er, I was drunk."*

It's pretty clear that just being in the Manics is all the inspiration Bradfield needs. Why would he want to let that go? Bound to Nicky and Sean with "dare I say, brotherly love?" he jokes, it's not time for them to hang up their boots just yet. With *Futurology* creating such a stir nearly 30 years into their career, and with Bradfield's somewhat humble realisation that they're no longer the teenagers who made *Generation Terrorists*, not just literally, but musically, the Manics still have so much to say – and despite now all being 45, they're still as urgent and thrilling as ever.

'If you feel like the expression is not as it used to be, then don't do it anymore. I don't feel that now. I don't drink on tour now, but there was a period of 10 years when I'd get drunk every single night. I can't do that anymore – but that's fine. I still go out on tour and sing and play as hard as I ever did. Being in a band was such a dream and it takes so much effort to get people to listen to you and to get to a certain point, if you're not enjoying it when you're there then don't do it. If there's no sense of wonder, then you should stop. Why would I ever want to stop being in the Manics? It's what I've always wanted to do and I still fucking love it.'

"We'll come back one day, we never really went away," Bradfield sings on *Futurology's* title track. "One day we will return, no matter how much it hurts." They've done just that for nearly 30-odd years – a longevity that'll no doubt continue.

James Dean Bradfield headlines the London Acoustic Guitar Show on Sunday September 14, 2014. The Manic Street Preachers' Futurology is out now. ***www.manicstreetpreachers.com***

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He built his fanbase using YouTube, has had five top 10 EPs on iTunes, and he's just released his debut album *The Morning*; we catch up before his set at The London Acoustic Guitar Show

Lewis Watson is just one representative of a growing number of singer-songwriters finding fame and record deals after uploading original tunes and a few covers to YouTube. The 21-year-old, from Oxford, first established himself by going the independent digital route, working to build his audience online and firming up his position as the shining star of the YouTube singer-songwriter era. He's escaped cyberspace now, and it's a new morning for the trendy guitar-toting troubadour; he's signed to Warner Bros. Records and he couldn't be happier. Since uploading videos to YouTube in 2009 having taught himself how to play the guitar, Lewis has had five chart-dominating EPs on iTunes (a couple hit the top spot), making it hardly surprising that his latest single 'Stay' is all over the radio.

To transition from playing covers in your bedroom, to being played on daytime radio used to take a while. Well, a lot longer than a year or so, anyway... In a short space of time, Lewis has captivated an assured international following with his combination of pop-fueled guitar licks and folky memoirs; not mention his tousled hair and skinny jeans – that, along with his poetic way with words and pangs of young love, explains why thousands of that following happen to be infatuated young women.

That's where the boy-next-door charm ends, though; it has been lost for sight of the new generation of troubadour. Watson crafts powerful melodies with an introspective longing, making his songs hanker for the big-time limelight.

Patrick James Eggle has an enviable roster of artists young and old; Lewis is the latest addition. Given that Lewis' Linville is still a young instrument, it's got one noticeable battle wound (thankfully, he's not scared to gig it – a quick search of Google shows all his latest live outings have featured this Eggle). As I question him about the chunk that's been knocked out of the top, though, he's quick to defend his treasured guitar. 'Ah, it was just one of those things. We were rehearsing for the tour, and my mic stand fell into it while I was playing – it was a rubbish stand! It happened in slow motion, I could almost see it was about to happen,' he writhes.

While his EPs were making their way up the charts, his numbers on social media were also on the up, including five million YouTube plays, 100,000 likes on Facebook, and five million Spotify streams. With the internet changing the way things are done, this new era of connectedness means a word-of-mouth following can make or break you. Lewis' early word-of-mouth, do-it-yourself attitude has only stood him in good stead for everything he's worked for so far: his album release.

'It's crazy; I still don't fully understand it. I think social media is great. Actually, the internet is great, because it allows you to say something and then have it go global within seconds. We're really lucky to have that but it's important not to put all of your eggs in one basket because at the start when I was doing internet stuff, it wasn't just that – I was playing an open mic every night and making sure that I had that local foundation. I wouldn't be here if it weren't for the internet, though.'

'I've been signed for two years or so now, so we've been recording the album since I first got signed, really. I always wanted to do the EPs and, fortunately, the label has been behind me with that as well. I guess from a label point of view, if you sign somebody and they want to put out five EPs, it's a bit like: "Oh, hang on, that's going to take two years, or whatever..." but they've been behind me for that. I always wanted the EPs to be low-fi versions, and monitor mixes, I never wanted someone to listen to the third EP and say: "Yeah, that's him, I get it," because that is not me at all. I knew I'd be developing over those two years and now I look back in hindsight and notice things I'd have done differently. How we've done the album has given me the luxury of hindsight. I know how important your first record is – I'm never going to have a first record again and I wanted it to be the best music that I can make at the moment.'

Lewis plays the main stage of the London Acoustic Guitar Show on Sunday 14 September, 2014.

www.lewiswatsonmusic.com

TONY McMANUS

McManus, considered one of the world's finest Celtic fingerstyle virtuosos, will appear at the London Acoustic Guitar Show on both Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 September 2014. . .

The Scottish-born, Canada-based fingerstyle guitarist will bring a wealth of experience and his instantly recognisable, flawless technique to the 2014 London Acoustic Guitar Show.

Tony McManus has come to be recognised throughout the world as the leading guitarist in Celtic music. From early childhood, his twin obsessions of traditional music and acoustic guitar have worked together to produce a startlingly original approach to this art. In Tony's hands, the complex ornamentation normally associated with fiddles and pipes are accurately transferred to guitar in a way that preserves the integrity and emotional impact of the music.

His 2009 release *The Makers's Mark* saw him showcase 15 of the finest luthier built guitars available. Recording a solo piece on each instrument, the project caught the attention of the mainstream rock guitar press in a way that acoustic work rarely does.

Never one to be typecast, Tony's new album *Mysterious Boundaries* is his most ambitious to date. An encouraging challenge from mandolin virtuoso Mike Marshall to learn the Bach E Major Prelude on guitar led to an exploration of classical and baroque music – seemingly very different to the jigs and reels that he grew up with. By examining the boundaries between genres and sticking to his steel string guitar (rather than the conventional classical guitar) McManus has produced a work of great originality and beauty, hailed by his peers as "a masterpiece" (John Renbourn), "beyond beautiful... it's perfect!" (Tommy Emmanuel) and which contains a truly remarkable rendition of Bach's colossal Chaconne in D Minor – one of the greatest compositions of any age.

Tony plays the London Acoustic Guitar Show on Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 September, 2014.

www.tonymcmanus.com

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GLENN TILBROOK AND CHRIS DIFFORD OF SQUEEZE

Two of the UK's most loved songwriters come together for a two-man acoustic show, headlining the main stage of the London Acoustic Guitar Show on Saturday 13 September 2014

One of the UK's most enduring songwriting duos, Glenn Tilbrook and Chris Difford of Squeeze, will play a headline set at the London Acoustic Guitar. Show on Saturday 13 September, 2014. For the first time in almost 20 years, Squeeze's Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook will be heading out on the road as a duo with *The At Odds Couple* tour that will see them present their songs and story in a unique way. In addition to this, they'll stop off at London's Olympia for a 45-minute acoustic set at the London Acoustic Guitar Show.

'There is a lot of history and myth to our relationship. There have been times when we've not gotten on and not communicated with each other but we are now at a place where we have a lot of respect for each other,' explains Chris. 'No relationship is plain sailing, whether it be personal or work, but over the years we've come to understand our differences and similarities and learnt to co-exist alongside each other.'

'The last few years have been really interesting. We've talked more than ever and reflected on our relationship and it's brought us to this point,' adds Glenn.

Since reforming in 2007, Squeeze has become a favourite on the festival circuit with appearances at V, Oxegen, T in the Park, Latitude and, to great acclaim, the seminal US Festival Coachella. In 2010, Squeeze's contribution to music was noted with the site of their first gig being awarded a prestigious PRS For Music Heritage plaque. It joined an ever-increasing list of Squeeze accolades alongside their Ivor Novello for Outstanding Contribution to British Music and their Nordoff-Robbins Icon Award, as well as Mojo Magazine's Icon Award.

In addition to performing a selection of hits, including 'Up The Junction' and 'Cool For Cats', Chris and Glenn will be dusting down some previously unrecorded songs that were written together back in the band's infancy but never recorded, "there are a few corkers in there", as well as playing tracks from their solo careers. The duo has also been working on new Squeeze material – set for release in 2015 - which will no doubt creep into the set list.

2010 also saw the band embark on their biggest tour in over 10 years taking their *Spot The Difference* show to over 20 venues around the UK. Ahead of the tour, Squeeze released the album *Spot The Difference* – a collection of 14 of their best-loved hits, re-recorded by the band to be as close to the original versions as possible (while challenging their fans to spot the difference!). Squeeze went back out on the road in 2012 with the direct-to-fan *Pop Up Shop* tour concept with every show recorded live each evening and made available at the end of the night from the merchandise stand.

Glenn recently released his third solo album *Happy Ending* which proved his musicality and sense of craft are more energised than ever. This album is a follow up to his critically acclaimed first outing as a solo artist *The Incomplete Glenn Tilbrook* (2001) and *Transatlantic Ping Pong* (2004). As well as his solo albums, Glenn has worked on a number of musical projects including 2009's album *Pandemonium Ensues* with his solo band The Fluffers and some prestigious guests in the shape of Johnny Depp and Vanessa Paradis. In 2011 he released *The Co-Operative*, a collaboration with blues legends Nine Below Zero, and recently he has been producing up and coming Australian band Millions. Glenn also finds time to be involved with his friend Mike Peter's charity Love Hope Strength, with whom he has trekked to the top of Mt. Fuji and Mt. Kilimanjaro as well as to Base Camp on Mt. Everest, helping to raise money for cancer units in deprived areas.

When they've not been touring and performing in Squeeze both Glenn and Chris have had successful solo careers. At The London Acoustic Guitar Show, they will be in the spotlight and under the microscope like never before as these two talents of the music industry come together to present a unique two-man show.

Glenn & Chris headline the main stage on Saturday 13 September.
www.squeezeofficial.com

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ELECTRIC LIVE

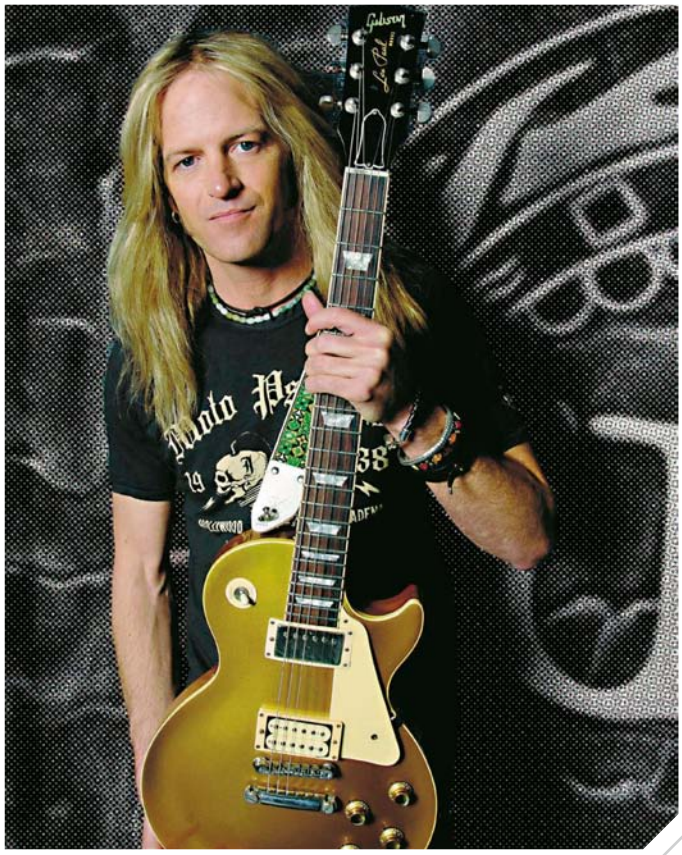
This year, we're expanding. Now there's a new exhibition floor dedicated to the electric guitar player. We know some of you like to get the best of both worlds, so here's who you can see with their electric guitars over the London Acoustic Guitar Show featuring Electric Live weekend...

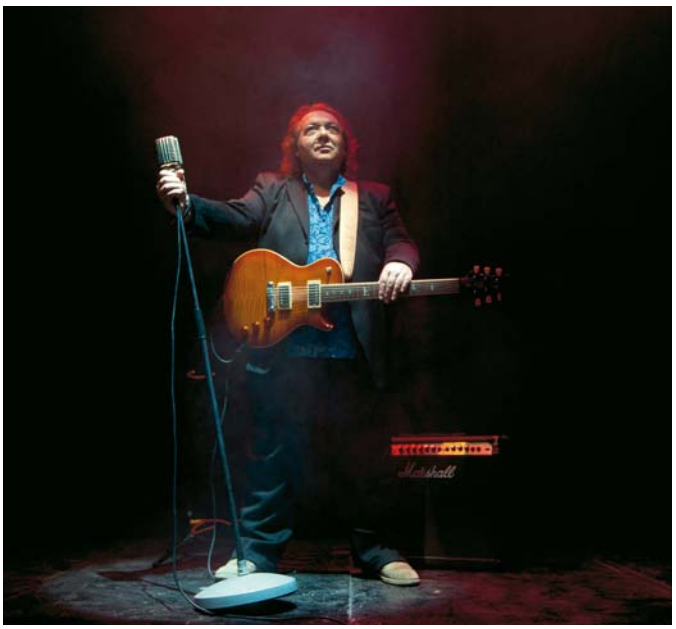
Doug Aldrich

When it comes to sharing the stage with world-class guitarists, David Coverdale has few equals. Let's see: during his time at the top he has played alongside the likes of Ritchie Blackmore, Tommy Bolin, Bernie Marsden, John Sykes, Vivian Campbell, Steve Vai and Jimmy Page. Then, in 2002, at the 25th anniversary of his legendary band Whitesnake, Coverdale brought another great guitarist into his hallowed fold – Doug Aldrich. Since joining Whitesnake, Doug has become David's principle co-writer and has also proven his skills behind a mixing board. Furthermore, like most of those who came before him, Doug is a 100% Marshall man so it's a pleasure to bring a performance to the London Acoustic Guitar Show featuring Electric Live in association with Marshall Amplification.

Doug will be performing on the main stage on Saturday 13 with his band Steamroller.

www.doughaldrich.com





Bernie Marsden

Bernie Marsden is an English blues-rock guitarist. In the early 70s Bernie was an original guitarist for hard rock outfit UFO before becoming an original member of Paice, Ashton & Lord in 1977. After PAL split up, Bernie joined David Coverdale in the newly formed Whitesnake, helping to establish the band as one of the most successful live rock bands in Europe and Japan. In 1982, Bernie co-wrote the multi-million selling hit 'Here I Go Again' before leaving Whitesnake to form Alaska.

Recently Bernie has played with Joe Bonamassa on several occasions, and in 2012 contributed to 'Place In My Heart' on Joe's recent, award-winning album, *Driving Towards The Daylight*. Bernie has also been guesting with Whitesnake again in the UK and Europe, coming on stage to play 'Here I Go Again'.

Bernie Marsden has long been respected for his rich, blues inspired style. His impeccable talent as a guitar player has kept him active in the music world for over 30 years and allowed him to share company with a veritable who's who of recording and touring musicians. In 2012, Bernie and PRS Guitars released his own signature edition guitar, the SE Bernie Marsden to critical acclaim. BB King once said: "Only two white men could play the blues. Eric Clapton, and that guy from Whitesnake."

Bernie will host a masterclass on Saturday 13 September.

www.berniemarsden.co.uk

NILE RODGERS

Nile Rodgers will star at Electric Live, the new show launched this year in tandem with The London Acoustic Guitar Show, at London Olympia. He will play on both days, Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 September 2014

Multiple Grammy-winning guitarist, songwriter and producer Nile Rodgers will appear at the London Acoustic Guitar Show featuring Electric Live on both Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 September, 2014. Rodgers will hold a Q&A and masterclass on both days, accompanied by his world-renowned 'Hitmaker' guitar.

Nile Rodgers' contribution to popular music has been one of the most significant of recent times, whether it be penning some of the most influential songs of the disco era with Chic, or producing countless hits for a wide variety of other artists spanning multiple decades and genres.

In the early 70s, he found a like-minded musician in another New York City resident, bassist Bernard Edwards. Almost immediately, Chic became the kings (and queens) of the dance and disco domain, scoring such hit albums as 1977's *Chic*, 1978's *C'est Chic*, and 1979's *Risqué*. But it was Chic's up-tempo, infectious hit singles that became dance floor standards, including 'Le Freak' and 'Good Times'.

Despite the hits, Rodgers' music career was just beginning. Toward the end of his tenure in Chic he had begun producing (and writing for) other artists, including hits for Sister Sledge ('We Are Family') and Diana Ross ('I'm Coming Out'). So with Chic no longer occupying most of his time, Rodgers was free to focus solely on working with others. What followed was an amazing string of some of the 80s biggest albums and singles. Nile's signature is scrawled across an amazing array of music from Madonna to Diana Ross, David Bowie to Eric Clapton, Mick Jagger, Sting, and Duran Duran.

Rodgers, as an artist, producer or writer, is responsible for the sales of more than 100 million records. In 2014, Nile Rodgers was awarded three Grammy Awards for his work with Daft Punk on their album *Random Access Memories* and the hit single 'Get Lucky'.

For show visitors only, we are releasing 350 advance auditorium tickets to guarantee entry to the Nile Rodgers performances each day – 700 in total. Once you've bought your weekend or day pass to gain entry to the exhibition, these advance auditorium tickets are available as an optional extra for £5 from the London Acoustic Guitar Show website (***www.londonacousticguitarshow.com)*** or over the phone by calling 01926 339 808. The remaining auditorium tickets will be released one hour before the performances each day (100 on Saturday / 100 on Sunday) and will be available free-of-charge on a first-come, first-served basis.

Nile Rodgers will headline Electric Live on both Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 September 2014.
www.nilerodgers.com

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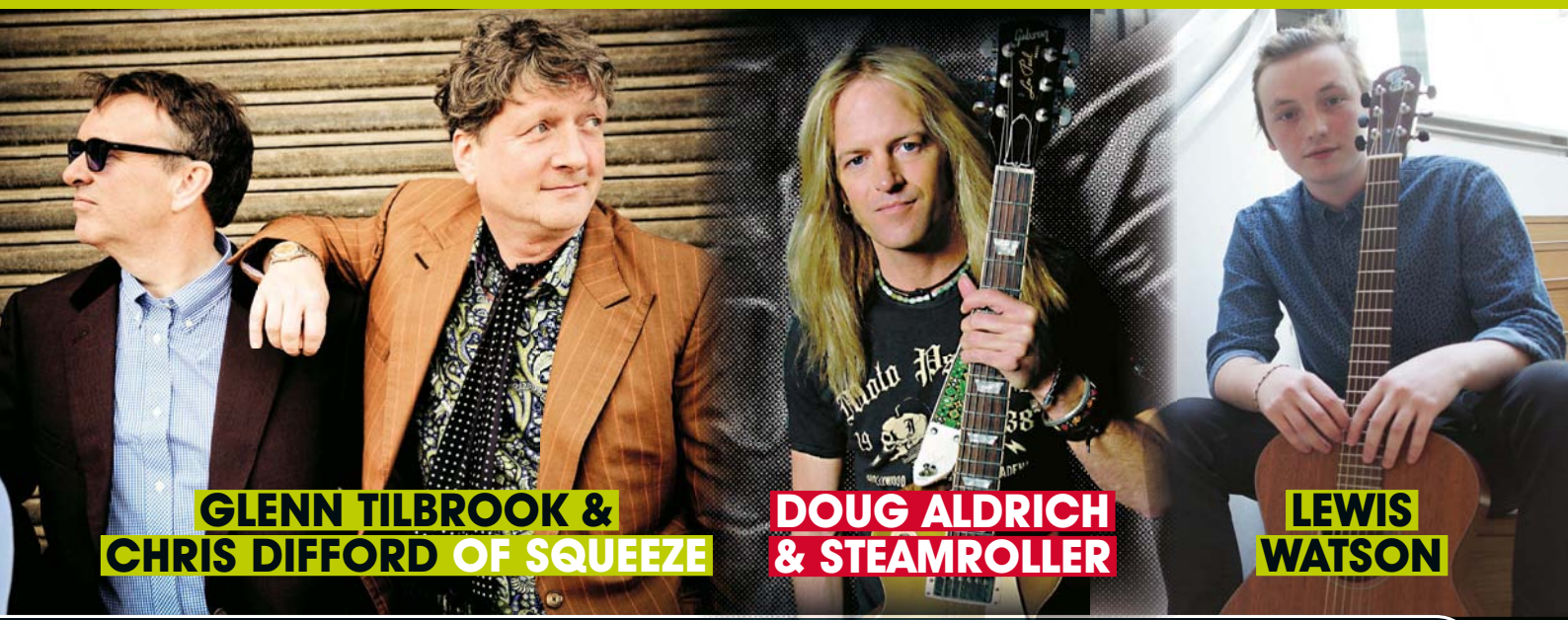

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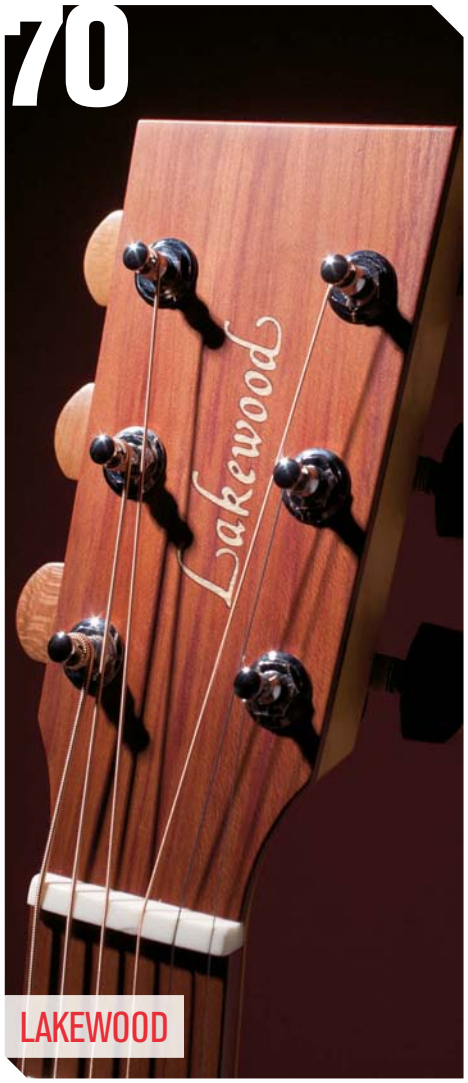
50 PATRICK JAMES EGGLE

54 ROZAWOOD

58 MARTIN

64 LOWDEN


70 LAKEWOOD

68 TANGLEWOOD

74 TAYLOR

80 FAITH

PATRICK JAMES EGGLE PARLOUR

It's retro all the way with this latest parlour guitar from Patrick James Eggle... David Mead comes over all old timey

Remember the old complaint: "They don't make 'em like they used to..."? Well, a few instrument makers seem to have taken it to heart and have set out to rummage through the history books in order to produce contemporary guitars that have the golden voice of another era. In particular, Patrick James Eggle has produced this parlour model that treads the path of yesteryear's manufacturing methods so accurately that it could easily be termed a modern classic in a literal sense!

BUILD QUALITY

The word on the street is that all mahogany parlour guitars are trending – indeed, Patrick tells us that he can't make enough of them at present. I've certainly noticed that I'm seeing more smaller bodied guitars pass before me these days. I guess it might have something to do with some conscious conservation of the rarer timbers – who knows? Or it might simply be down to the popularity of an artist like Ed Sheeran, whose all-mahogany signature model we looked at a few issues ago.

In any case, this delightfully understated 12-frets-to-the-body parlour guitar looks older than its years from the outset. Its plain, unadorned appearance places it not too far from 1920s models from C.F. Martin & Co., historically speaking, and I warmed to it immediately.

So it's out with the ruler and some measurements to give you some sense of scale. The upper bout is approximately 254mm, with a lower bout at 345mm, thinning down to a waist of 210mm. The body length is 485mm and the depth goes from 87mm at the neck side and 103mm at the tail. So it's a delightfully petite instrument with an all mahogany construction that promises some warm and sweet tones in the long run, but I think we ought to take some time out to consider some of the finer points of construction first of all.

To begin with, the body and neck are all made from Honduras mahogany – a wood that is becoming harder and harder to source in any quantity, but a timber that was widely used in guitars a century ago. The simplicity of the finely grained mahogany is virtually unbroken, too, Patrick having decided to forego any fancy trim or ornate rosette along the way. The mahogany used in the soundboard is lighter for a faster response and more volume – in fact one of the more remarkable things about this guitar is its weight. Just my initial fumbling around revealed that it's a very light instrument to hold.

Breaking the mahogany trend it's old growth Brazilian rosewood for the Eggle's headplate, fingerboard and bridge. True to say that it's a controversial wood to use these days, but there was a time when guitar manufacturers used timber that was readily available and this included Brazilian rosewood. You'll even find it on the fretboards of some 1950s Fender Strats if you look hard enough. The tuners here are worthy of note in that they are aged nickel Waverlys and are a really beautiful asset as they add to the general vintage vibe in place here.

One of the older style building methods that Patrick has brought to this guitar is that it has no adjustable truss rod. Instead, there is a non-adjustable square steel rod running down the centre of the neck. Not particularly in favour these days, Patrick says that he loves them, despite the extra degree of care and attention that has to be paid to the neck construction and fret levelling. He says that there is less string

PATRICK JAMES EGGLE PARLOUR

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: Patrick James Eggle
Model: Parlour
Retail Price: £4,400
Body Size: Parlour
Made In: UK
Top: Honduras mahogany
Back and Sides: Honduras mahogany
Neck: Honduras mahogany
Fingerboard: Brazilian rosewood
Frets: 19
Tuners: Waverly aged nickel
Nut Width: 44.5mm
Scale Length: 632mm
Strings Fitted: .012 - .052
Left Handers: To order
Gig Bag/Case Included: Hiscox case

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Fabulous tone and a powerful voice – a real mighty mite!
Cons: Lack of ornamentation and vintage chic might not be everyone's cup of tea
Overall: Take some top grade timber and combine it with classic methods of construction by a modern master and you can't lose!

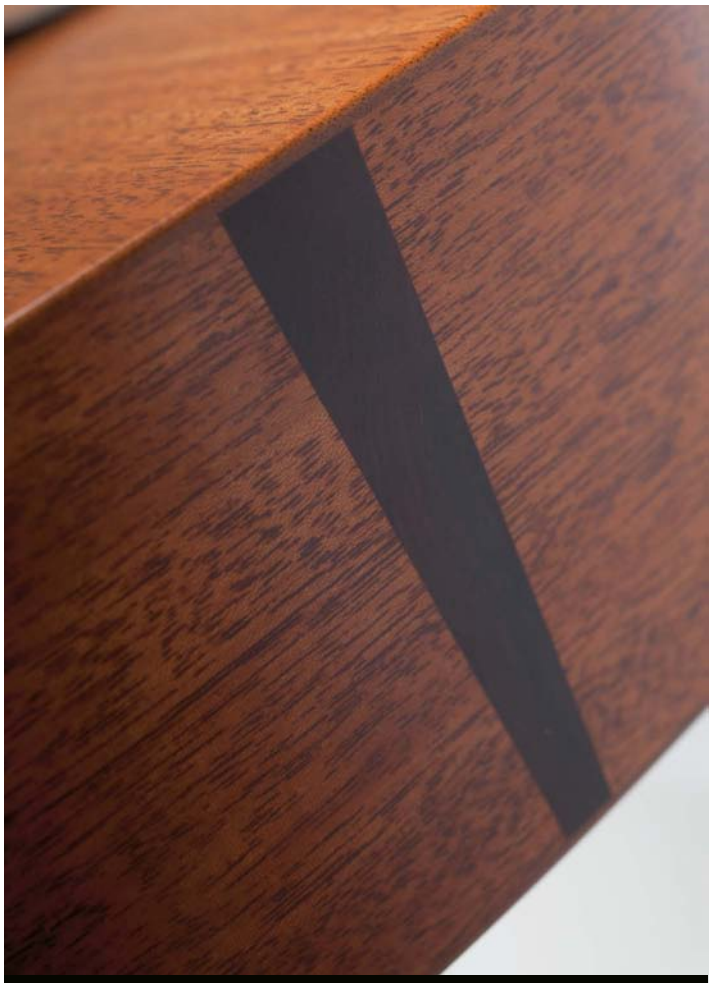
ACOUSTIC RATING

Build Quality	✪✪✪✪✪
Sound Quality	✪✪✪✪✪
Value for Money	✪✪✪✪✪

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS

Patrick James Eggle
www.eggle.co.uk



Vintage inspired with a contemporary twist and remarkable tone and range

On the PJE parlour we also find a traditional arrow jointed headstock

energy dissipated through the neck which means an increase in volume and fewer dead spots. We'll see if this theory holds true in a few moments!

Other building methods include the use of hide glue – as in the golden era acoustics – which dries hard and increases the transference of sound between the constituent parts of the instrument. Also the arrow jointed headstock – a very strong joint where the volute actually forms the arrow head which is slotted into a vee in the headstock. Tricky to do, I'm told, and more expensive – but it's rugged and should prevent any accidental decapitation of a beloved instrument!

SOUND QUALITY

Whereas a lot of all mahogany acoustics guitars have a reputation for a dark, warm tone, this guitar is exceptionally bright – but in a beautiful, sweet way. It's also surprisingly loud, which is no doubt because of a combination of the factors that I've mentioned above. Patrick was also right about the truss rod eliminating dead spots, because I couldn't find any at all. In fact virtually everywhere I played on the neck gave a similar tonal response – which is really quite unusual. Most guitars tend to loose a little sustain as you go further up the neck but the parlour coped amazingly well in this respect. Chords played around the seventh to tenth frets sang out wonderfully to the extent that I'm sure if I engaged in a blindfold test many people would suspect that they were listening to a much bigger guitar. Any illusions about a parlour sized body resulting in a lack of bass need to be readdressed, too, as Patrick has squared the circle in this respect and managed to conjure up a very useable amount of bass response from this little chap.

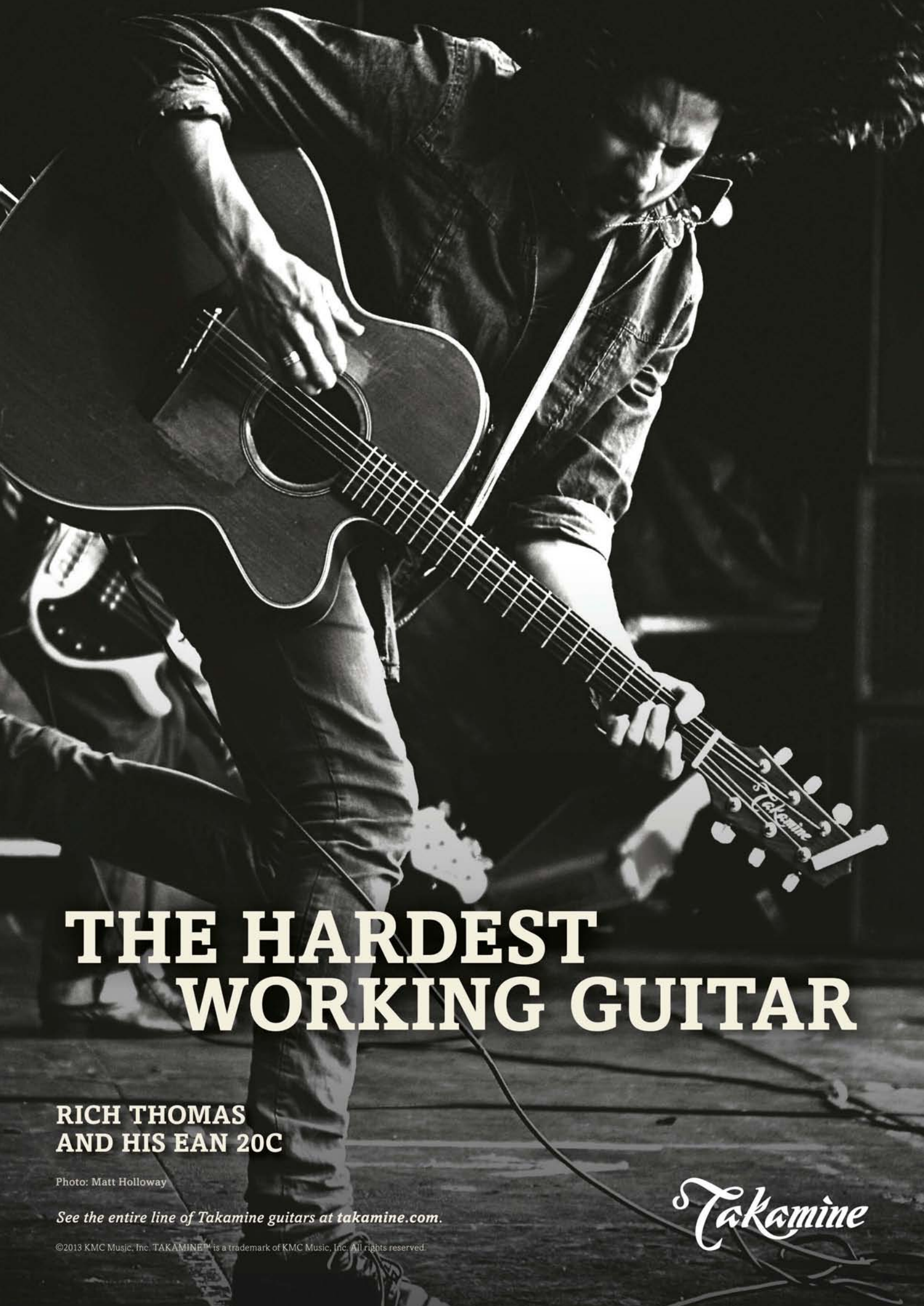
Naturally, the 44.5mm nut width met with my approval as I always seem to be ranting on in these pages about how those extra couple of mm make an incredible difference when playing fingerstyle.

The mahogany soundboard is ligher for a faster response and more volume

CONCLUSION

Some of the methods of construction I've detailed here have been abandoned because they are time consuming and expensive, rather than merely "old fashioned". I would imagine that they don't sit well with contemporary production line manufacturing, either. But I've played some acoustics that were built in the 1920s or 1930s and have sometimes been amazed by how much they still have left to give in terms of volume and tone. Here, I think Patrick has managed to call up some of the prime virtues of the older style of building and merged them together in a contemporary instrument with truly remarkable tonal and dynamic ranges. Bravo!

David Mead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ROZAWOOD 28-D DREADNOUGHT

A new twist on a familiar looking model meets the critical eye of David Mead...

Rozawood hail from the Czech Republic and if you cast your mind back, you'll remember that almost exactly a year ago I looked at a Rozawood Woodstock Lady, a parlour style guitar that I liked quite a lot. This time around it's the turn of the company's 28 Dreadnought, very likely a homage to C.F. Martin & Co.'s favourite son, but quite a stunning good looker in its own right. Running my eyes down the spec, there are some interesting upgrades to the basic dread complement and so let's dive straight in and take a look...

BUILD QUALITY

My introduction to Rozawood guitars last year was a good experience. Just in case my memory was playing tricks, I re-read my review of the Woodstock and remembered it as being a small-bodied guitar that was simply packed with character. It was extremely versatile too, in that it had an uncanny ability to move seamlessly between different music genres and come up trumps every time. The most amazing thing was that it hadn't been long off the workbench – and looking at the interior label on the 28, I find that this guitar left the workshop in late March this year. Another young'un, then!

Rozawood has elected to use master grade alpine spruce for the top wood on the 28D and it's a fine-looking piece of timber with a very subtle horizontal watermark that's only really visible in certain light. It adds a shimmer to the top and a character all its own. I suspect that the top has been stained slightly in order to produce that amber glow we all know and love – but this instrument is only a couple of months old and so it's a bit early for it to be natural.

A bottle blonde, perhaps? The top inlay is the familiar herringbone pattern and the rosette is unashamedly "28 style" too, as is the mock tortoiseshell pick guard.

Back and sides are East Indian rosewood with an unfussy straight grain, the back bearing a zig-zag centre strip, offsetting the ivoroid binding around the back edges nicely.

Moving on to the neck, it's Honduran mahogany all the way. A timber that is getting harder and harder to source, this type of mahogany has been the tonewood of choice for many makers over the years. The spec tells me that not only is the neck equipped with a double action truss rod, it's also been carbon reinforced, too. The contour of the neck is down as a "hybrid C/V" shape and this is something I remember from the Woodstock, only I think that here the V is more pronounced, whereas I found it very subtle on the Lady. There is a diamond shaped volute trespassing onto the squared off headstock and the slightly weathered looking open gear Gotoh tuners are a perfect match for the vintage vibe already in place here.

Flipping the guitar over, we find the Rozawood logo emblazoned upon a pearl banner that is both subtle and attractive at the same time. Another flash of luxury is the Madagascar rosewood headplate – this really is turning out to be the recipe for a great sounding instrument.

The ebony fingerboard sits below a bone nut and bears 20 finely finished medium frets with snowflake inlays, which brings us back to the ebony bridge and bone string saddle. It's a nice touch that the end pin and string pegs are ebony too – very classy!

The 28D has been finished in nitrocellulose and so it's definitely going to age gracefully – in fact I'm dying

ROZAWOOD 28 DREADNOUGHT

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: Rozawood
Model: 28 Dreadnought
Retail Price: £2,720
Body Size: Dreadnought
Made In: Czech Republic
Top: Alpine spruce
Back and Sides: East Indian rosewood
Neck: Honduran mahogany
Fingerboard: Ebony
Frets: 20
Tuners: Gotoh open gear
Nut Width: 44.5mm
Scale Length: 644mm
Strings Fitted: .013 Martin SP Lifespan
Left Handers: To order
Gig Bag/Case Included: Optional hardshell case

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Great build quality and a mature tone
Cons: Nothing to report, here!
Overall: A new take on an established model with some fascinating refinements along the way

ACOUSTIC RATING

Build Quality	★★★★★
Sound Quality	★★★★½
Value for Money	★★★★½

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS

Rozawood Guitars
www.rozawood.cz

If you're a player who puts tone and build quality first, Rozawood is for you

The 28D i s a fine guitar and the passage of time will see it into a great one

to find out if this guitar has already acquired the same sort of maturity in its short life as I heard from the Woodstock...

SOUND QUALITY

In general, I think we know what to expect from a dreadnought; they were produced at a time when volume and presence were paramount for an acoustic guitar and onboard amplification was plain science fiction. Later on, a single microphone often had the job of bringing an instrument's voice to the audience and the robust nature of the dreadnought's sound became a staple for the troubadours from the early 70s. Having said that though, I've found some contemporary dreadnoughts to be very mid-rangey and muddy and so it's always difficult to judge these things. Happily, the Rozawood has tone a-plenty with the sort of balance you'd expect only from a top gymnast. It really is amazing how they manage to get such a grown-up tone from such a young guitar – it certainly bodes well for the future and how it'll sound then.

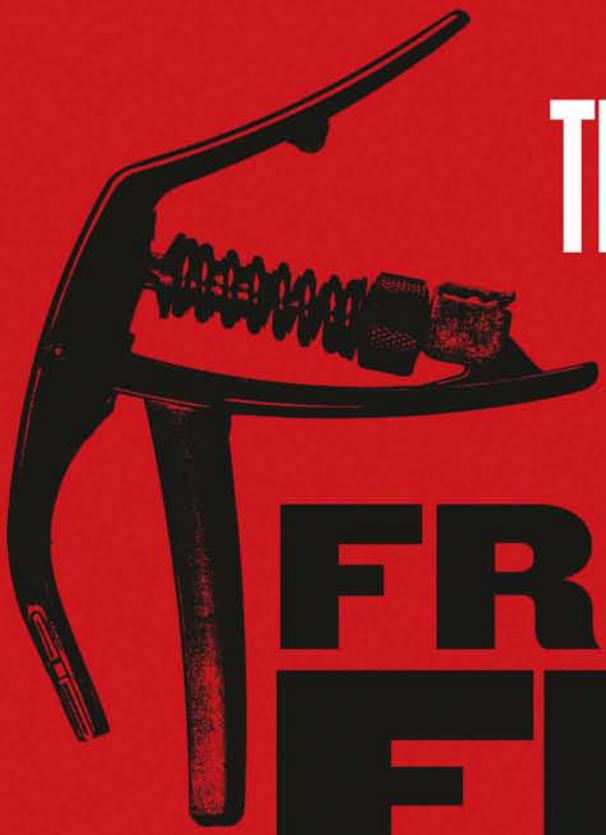
The V profile to the neck has a great feel to it and the 44.5mm nut width is great for those of us with aspirations towards fingerstyle, too. I think that dreadnoughts probably come into their own when playing chordal accompaniment and, as such, I concentrated on bashing out some singer-songwriter friendly material as best I could and the 28D handled it all like a true pro. It's loud without being brash, trebly without sounding brittle with a sort of golden sheen to everything it produces. It faired well with drop D tuning too, without a hint of sogginess in the bass and I suspect that I could have experimented with alternative tunings all day long without losing any of the feisty good nature of the 28D along the way.

The 28D has been finished in nitrocellulose and so it's going to age gracefully

CONCLUSION

As you can no doubt tell, I like this guitar a lot. I think it's fair to say that Martin's D28 is an instrument against which all others are judged and the Rozawood really does enter that hallowed arena with considerable style. I'd quite happily compare it to a HD-28V in terms of its crispness of tone and the quality of the build. Of course, many would mourn the lack of the Martin logo on the headstock and it could be argued that you can buy a Martin for less. But if you're a player who puts tone and build quality first then Rozawood is definitely a company to explore. The 28D really is a very fine sounding guitar and I'm sure that the passage of time will see it turn into a great one.

David Mead



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MARTIN 000-15M

Understated, incredible value for money, and boldly in fashion; Guy Little hankers for the all-'hog Martin...

C.F. Martin & Co.'s history as one of the world's leading guitar makers knows no bounds. For over 180 years, America's oldest guitar brand is a tour-de-force for constantly redefining standards and coming up trumps. Whether it's a Road Series, or a Custom Shop D-45, when buying a Martin guitar you can't really go far wrong.

Martin's first all-mahogany guitar was the 2-17 – an adorable parlour with a slotted headstock – released in the '20s. These nimble little powerhouses became trendsetters for blues players because they were loud, bright, sweet – and also cheap. Gibson soon found that this was the way to go and released their L-O mahogany top in the latter part of that decade.

The Martin style 15 then came into being in the '40s, and the 000-15M that I have sitting on my knee, with its gorgeous understated looks, is the new trendsetter – for the modern guitar-toting troubadour, that is. Gabrielle Aplin is a key Martin ambassador for this model.

BUILD QUALITY

No matter what guitar I'm about to review I always have to get one thing out of the way first – smelling the guitar as I pull it from the case (a hardshell TKL lined with green faux fur). The aroma is positively delicious; almost as delicious as the choclately mahogany that's neatly tucked inside.

The 000-15M continues the 000 Martin 14-fret-to-body size – which is sitting comfortably on my knee as I write this. The first thing you'll notice are its minimal appointments and simple looks – again, taking inspiration from the earlier guitars from the 40s and 50s. There's no binding here at all, only minimal fine lines on the soundhole rosette. The understated appeal of all-'hog guitars with no superfluous adornments is certainly in vogue at the moment. Ask any luthier and they'll tell you the same thing – everyone wants mahogany.

Whether this is to do with notable players, a resurgence for old-time trendsetters, or because we're going all environmentally conscious, I don't know – but there's a demand.

It's all-solid mahogany for the top, back and sides, as well as the neck. These guitars are US-made, in the same factory as some highly ornate models, and they all share the same build quality of some Martins that dwarf the price of this instrument.

Continuing with the old-style appointments, we've got nickel open-geared tuners with butternbean knobs sitting atop the headstock, which has a lovely figured east Indian rosewood headplate. There's also the Delmar faux tortoise pickguard that sits in with the grain of the 000-15M perfectly. We've got a bone nut at the bridge with ebony pins and a string spacing of 2-1/8". It's got great all-rounder player appeal. In fact, the only thing that's a little fancy is the abalone diamond finerboard inlays – an upgrade from the usual dots. The neck is a low oval shape, which fits in your hand perfectly, and would be a welcome addition to someone migrating over from an electric guitar. The satin finish enhances this guitar's playability – which it was oozing with from the start. It takes very little effort to make this guitar truly sing.

The general look and feel of this instrument is one that's simple and uncluttered, yet it's achingly trendy. This tells us one thing: it's not about the flashy looks here. Where Martin could have skimped and gone with laminated tonewoods, it has remained faithful to a no-frills approach, and it's all about one thing: tone. Unadulterated, glorious tone.

SOUND QUALITY

So I've already fallen in love with the looks of this guitar, but will I love how it sounds?

MARTIN 000-15M

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: C.F Martin & Co.
Model: 000-15M
Retail Price: £1,099
Body Size: 000 14-fret
Made In: USA
Top: Solid mahogany
Back and Sides: Solid mahogany
Neck: Solid mahogany
Fingerboard: East Indian rosewood
Frets: 20
Tuners: Nickel open-gear with butterbean knobs
Fingerboard width at nut: 1-11/16"
Scale Length: 25.4"
Electronics: Optional
Strings Fitted: C.F. Martin & Co SP Lifespan Phosphor Bronze
Left Handers: Yes
Gig Bag/Case Included: Hardcase

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Wonderfully balanced, articulate and engaging across the whole tonal spectrum
Cons: No binding and no electronics might not be for some
Overall: A sensational guitar that should be a part of every player's collection

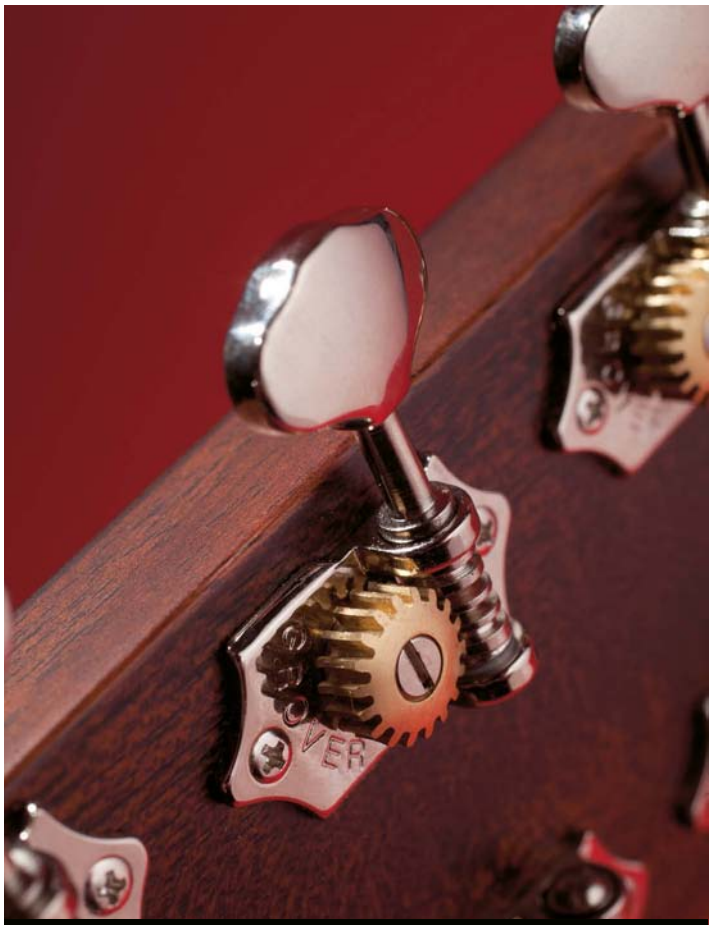
ACOUSTIC RATING

Build Quality	✪✪✪✪✪
Sound Quality	✪✪✪✪✪
Value for Money	✪✪✪✪✪

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS

Westside Distribution / C.F. Martin & Co.
www.martinguitar.com
www.westsidedistribution.com m


Vintage inspired with a modern in vogue appeal – a "must try" for everyone

The value for money on offer with the 000-15M is nothing short of amazing

First things first: the bracing. Martin has used a simplified A-frame take on the usual X-bracing system with a section that reinforces the bridge plate, with struts made from Sitka spruce which aims to create a tight, bright, and vibrant tone chamber.

When you think of mahogany guitars, you'll probably think blues; that's alright, but this 000-15M is so much more. The mahogany produces a clear, articulate, and balanced tone across the entire range; another tick next to the "all-rounder" box. Fingerstyle licks are crisp and punchy as you'd expect (I wasn't expecting a 'hog top to be so crisp, actually) but when you strum chords it takes this guitar into a new level of hyper activity, which is why you'll see so many singer-songwriters wielding one of these. Its sound is perfect for vocal accompaniment and despite its size (which may limit how much force it can take in comparison to say, the D-15M) it's a loud and bright guitar that covers everything you can throw at it. The tone is lush and warm when you're playing with your fingers, yet dig in with a plectrum and it's almost a different guitar. The responsiveness continues when you drop it in another tuning, put a capo on it, pick single notes, strum it, or play lead licks up and down the fretboard. It's a bold instrument – its demure and understated looks juxtaposed with its bright and alive tone. It almost feels as though it's jumping around in your hands as you play it, needing taming when you're digging in, while it dances around gracefully as you pick it.

The one thing this model doesn't have is an option to plug in. That's fine, though – if you need that option, then there's the 000-15ME, which will cost you around £150 more. That leads us on to the price: £1,099. Well, it's a no brainer, really. Outstanding value for money, with buckets full of tone and playability.

Special mention for the C.F. Martin & Co. strings which really are glorious

CONCLUSION

I am completely enamoured with this guitar. I can't think of another guitar that won me over so quickly, actually. It's everything I look for in a guitar: simple, unfussy, great tone, and excellent playability. Oh, and it's not going to break the bank either. I must mention the strings here, too, because I really think they make a difference. The Martin SP Lifespan Bronze light gauge strings have no squeakiness to them; they feel completely natural, and they sound glorious. You might want to up the gauge if you require that bluesy, slide honk, but they'll have you covered.

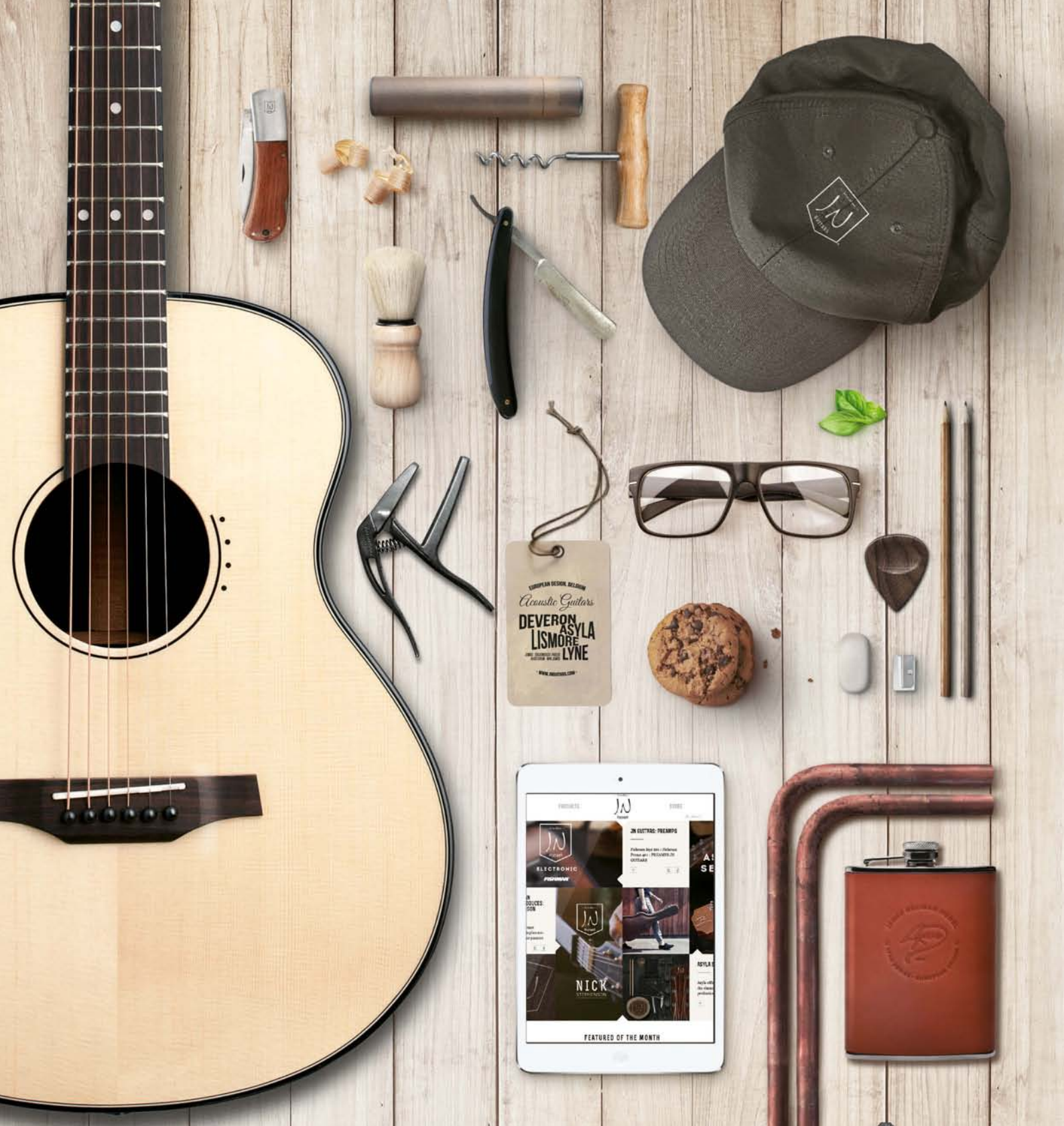
Its appeal is centre stage at the moment with the all-mahogany trend going full-force. It's uber sexy, no-frills approach makes me covet this guitar unlike many others not just in this price range, but ones that cost a considerable amount more. I'd not think twice about adding this to my guitar collection.

Guy Little

#seriousaboutguitars

Dave Mann Music

*Price based on UK cover and based on UK average pint cost of £3.10.
**£100 excess applies to computer equipment. Allianz Musical Insurance is a trading name of Allianz Insurance plc.



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LOWDEN OLD LADY

Pierre Bensusan's faithful six string companion becomes a 40th anniversary signature model... David Mead spends an afternoon with the Old Lady

There really is quite a story behind this guitar. In Paris during the late 1970s, DADGAD maestro Pierre Bensusan played his first Lowden guitar and found that it suited his unique fusion of world music amazingly well. Inspired by this, he ordered an instrument direct from George Lowden who then went about building a guitar to complement Pierre's pioneering style. Since then, Pierre and the Old Lady, as she became known, have been virtually inseparable both in concert and on numerous recordings. Now battered, worn and road weary, the original has been retired in favour of a brand new signature model. George Lowden and Pierre realised that, by a happy coincidence, this year marked a 40th anniversary for both of them, and the idea was hatched to build a special edition based on the original spec of the instrument to celebrate 40 years in the business for them both...

BUILD QUALITY

This guitar isn't just a tribute to the original, it's as near as possible to being an exact clone. The story continues that the Old Lady was flown over to Lowden in Ireland and every dimension was precisely measured so that the new version could be faithful to the original in every respect, right down to the interior bracing. The guitars that were being built by Lowden back in the late 1970s differ from today's models – as George Lowden says: 'Back then there were certain things that I was doing with the internal voicing and with the dimension of the soundbox and the particular way that I voiced his guitar to suit Pierre...' and so whereas it's been possible for contemporary players to get a model as near as dammit to Pierre's original by buying an O22, this one is absolutely spot on.

As you might expect, the top of the Old Lady is red cedar – something that is very much a Lowden hallmark throughout the range. It bears the imitation tortoiseshell scratchplate – apparently a unique design – and the cutaway, which itself is worthy of another historical footnote. When the guitar was originally completed it didn't have a cutaway, but Pierre subsequently decided that he needed one in order to facilitate fingering on the upper frets. So the guitar was sent back to Lowden where George carefully re-bent the sides and cut into the soundbox in order to accommodate a cutaway. This is why the style of cutaway we see here is different from the guitars in the original 70s line. Other features here that are invisible to the eye include the interior bracing which Lowden tell me has a treble bias and that the soundbox geometry has been voiced to give as flat a response as possible. These two might seem to be contradictory at first sight, but I'm guessing that they do in fact work together to produce a bright, but even response. We'll see if I'm right in a few paragraphs!

Back and sides here are from very old Cuban mahogany, which in terms of grain markings is very similar to any other mahogany except for a paleness in colour – there's much less of a "honeyed" texture to it, if you see what I mean. The bindings are highly flamed maple and everything is finished in Lowden's traditional matt lacquer.

The Old Lady's neck is a five-piece laminate comprising three pieces of mahogany with two thin strips of maple, the latter forming a stripe that flares onto the guitar's heel. The neck is described by Lowden as being "low profile" meaning that it's pretty slim-looking; and my probing fingers detect a very slight V to the shape of the back of the neck, too.

The tuners are gold coloured Gotoh 510s with black ebony buttons, lending a classy look to the rosewood fronted headstock. There's a 45mm nut at this end of the ebony fretboard as part of what Lowden refer to as their "GL fingerstyle" package that not only uses a wide nut but also has a 60mm width at the neck joint. Combined with the slim neck, this looks very

LOWDEN OLD LADY
TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: Lowden
Model: Old Lady
Retail Price: £4,960
Body Size: Jumbo
Made In: Ireland
Top: Red cedar
Back and Sides: Cuban mahogany
Neck: Five-piece mahogany/maple
Fingerboard: Ebony
Frets: 20
Tuners: Gotoh 510
Nut Width: 45mm
Scale Length: 650mm
Strings Fitted: Elixir .012 - .053
Gig Bag/Case Included: Hiscox hard case

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: A great guitar from a player with a reputation for stunning tone
Cons: Damn near perfect except for some very slight midrange muddiness
Overall: A signature model with incredible depth that should appeal to fingerstylists everywhere

ACOUSTIC RATING

Build Quality	✪✪✪✪✪
Sound Quality	✪✪✪✪◐
Value for Money	✪✪✪✪◐

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS

Lowden Guitars
www.georgelowden.com

The trebles sing out, while the sustain is nothing short of supernatural

It's an unfussy instrument focussing on pure tone and optimum response

flat and wide, with the string spacing down at the nut looking exceptionally generous. Lowden's trademark split saddle sits atop a rosewood bridge, the strings feeding through the back in the company's time-honoured tradition.

SOUND QUALITY

I don't usually find dreadnoughts or jumbos particularly comfortable to play sitting down, but the Old Lady sits in your lap like a favourite cat with none of that "right arm hanging in space" feeling I've encountered before. In honour of its heritage, I tuned the instrument straight to DADGAD, as I figured that this was the tuning for which it had been voiced. At first, my senses were a bit overwhelmed; there's an evenness across the tonal spectrum I wasn't expecting from what is basically a jumbo cutaway. The trebles sing out, while the basses rumble and the sustain is nothing short of supernatural. Some notes around the seventh fret on the top strings appear to "bloom" after you've played them and you can feel every note you play transmitted back to you via the body resonance. I had the opportunity to hear one of Pierre's pieces played to me on this guitar and I must say that the separation of the notes combined with the sonority of the trebles and nobility of the basses was really quite staggering. There's quite a vast dynamic range available, too; it seems to respond to the gentlest touch, but can go from soft piano to strong fortissimo without missing a step.

If I found any fault at all it was around the troublesome 175Hz (F#) frequency – many dreads/jumbos seem to suffer from a slight loss of sustain and a bit of boxiness around here to the extent that studio engineers are accustomed to dialling down this particular frequency in order to tame it. It isn't a problem, however, as it's not particularly pronounced and if you weren't looking for it, you probably wouldn't notice it.

The 40th anniversary for both Lowden and Pierre coincide with this guitar

CONCLUSION

I have to keep reminding myself that this is effectively a signature model and that it has been designed both physically and tonally for another player – and in this case a very great one, too. Quite often you find that signature models are not suitable for the everyman – there are quirks and anomalies present that won't suit everyone – but I didn't notice anything I didn't like about the Old Lady at all from a playing perspective. It's an unfussy instrument totally devoid of unnecessary whistles and bells, focussing instead on pure tone and optimum response. In fact, I've remarked often in the past that I can tell when I'm in the presence of a really great instrument when I sit and play it for far longer than is necessary for a review and this was certainly the case here. It has to be said that the Old Lady carries a signature model price tag and it's true that you could buy an O22 and come close, but you'd be missing out on a lot if you did!

David Mead

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TANGLEWOOD
TWB 24 M5

Made for duellin' or keepin' on a-foolin'? Alun Lower gets to grips with a toe-stompin' bargain from Tanglewood...

One of the very best things about playing guitar is that you can (relatively) easily transition one set of skills from one instrument to another. Whether you fancy trying out life on the heavy side with a full-blown electric, sliding away on a lapsteel, or transcribing 'Bohemian Rhapsody' down to ukulele size, there's plenty us six-stringers can apply ourselves to and as the TWB 24 M5 from Tanglewood shows – it doesn't have to cost you the earth. Of course, there's every bit a chance that you're only interested in the banjo and in that case too, Tanglewood is hoping that this will be the perfect place to start your journey.

BUILD QUALITY

Right out of the case, the TWB five-string banjo has a rather impressive weight to it, just as you'd hope. The flowery adornments on the rosewood fingerboard immediately draw your eye and naturally invoke a certain Americana charm. The body itself – including the resonator – are all constructed from maple, with a small slice of ebony breaking things up on the tip of the bridge. The metal parts of the body (including the tone ring) are all described by Tanglewood as "full alloy" and the body/pot itself is capped by a Remo Renaissance head.

The back of the body and the neck are all finished in gloss – reasonably thick in application but not too bad and for the most part very well applied. While the metalwork and the rest of the body are well constructed and fitted, the neck unfortunately has a few problem areas. First off, the frets are a little rough. In all honesty, it's not a massive detriment to the playability of the banjo itself, but, more worryingly, there are several sharp edges running up the length of the neck. I didn't encounter anything that would have drawn blood, but after a fair bit of sliding around there were several scratches and areas of roughness on the underside of my fingers. In my experience, Tanglewood is normally very, very good indeed when it comes to this kind of detail so while I hope it turns out to be a one-off, it's probably something to watch for if you're trying one out in a shop.

Elsewhere on the neck, too, there are more finishing imperfections, though thankfully they don't impact on the overall instrument quite as much as the frets. The fingerboard itself was scratched in some sections, which is entirely superficial but a shame nonetheless. Lastly, I spotted a red "X" drawn onto the top of the headstock – clearly a construction mark, but once again something I would hope not to see on a finished instrument. It's likely an issue isolated to this particular example, but when all these little elements combine it smacks a little of a rush job and should mean that buyers exercise a little caution when inspecting the particular instrument they intend to buy.

The only other gripe I have is most certainly the most superficial of all, but the "Union Series by Tanglewood" logo on the front of the headstock looks a little cheap and pixelated, a result I assume of bad printing or a low-res logo in the first instance. In either case, it's not so much the printing that bothers me but the fact that it's there at all – Tanglewood is a quality British brand that enjoys a great reputation, hard-earned by a line-up of really excellent quality instruments and a genuinely passionate mentality. They don't need to resort to coming up with these extra labels and I for one would rather see them wave their regular banner with pride. Right – time to play!

SOUND QUALITY

Construction issues aside, I was really rather charmed by the TWB from the moment I tuned it up to its recommended open G tuning. The overall tone is bright and articulate with a good, bright, snappy attack – perhaps just a little brittle but, honestly, that's pretty much what I would expect and I think it would be a little harsh to take away from all the other positives in the sound. All notes ring out without any hint of buzz and intonation is spot-on from top to bottom. Even after several hours of playing, the tuners only needed minute adjustment – excellent stuff.

The quality of tone is truly a testament to the overall build quality of the various components – the Remo head bites as sharp as you like while the tone ring and resonator appear to be working excellently in tandem to produce plenty of zing and punchy treble. It's a fairly compressed tone overall that betrays the price tag ever so slightly, but again this is to be expected in this price range. Sustain and dynamics are reasonable also, with the TWB responding nicely to changes in power and volume without ever feeling overloaded, or indeed overbearing.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the TWB is clearly something of a mixed bag in some respects, but crucially is a real charmer in others. Tone and playability (not counting the fret ends) are generally very good – I found myself quite content to zip out fast little licks for hours on end, with the intonation and set-up providing a stable and very enjoyable platform to do so on.

Where the TWB falls down is in the little details, and undoubtedly there are some areas that potential buyers will have to look out for. For this reason I would suggest trying out this particular banjo in your local emporium before making the commitment. It may well be that the issues I've highlighted here are isolated to this review sample and not generally present on retail units. Despite the issues, I had a lot of fun with the Tanglewood and would definitely suggest not skipping over it entirely. Find one that manages to shed some of these flaws and you'll have a cracking entry-level banjo that should stand the test of time for many happy years.

ALUN LOWER

TANGLEWOOD TWB 24 M5

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: Tanglewood
Model: TWB 24 M5
Retail Price: £299
Made in: China
Brackets: 24
Resonator: Maple
Sides: Maple
Neck: Maple
Bridge: Maple with ebony tip
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Tone Ring: Full alloy
Tailpiece: Adjustable
Head: Remo Renaissance
Scale Length: 670mm
Machine Heads: Vintage cream buttons
Frets: 22
Gig Bag/Case Included: No

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Good tonality with a bright attack that sounds wonderful in its open G tuning
Cons: Sharp fret ends, some issues that should have been dealt with in production
Overall: Try before you buy, but otherwise a great entry-level banjo

ACOUSTIC RATING

Build Quality	★★★
Sound Quality	★★★★
Value for Money	★★★½

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS

Tanglewood Guitars
www.tanglewoodguitars.co.uk

LAKEWOOD M-38 CUSTOM

An unusual European union of tonewoods feature in this custom guitar from Lakewood... David Mead keeps an open mind

At the Frankfurt music show this year, Lakewood announced that it was now possible to have a guitar built by their custom facility employing only European woods. In order to bring this about a few traditions had to be rethought – fretboards, for instance, are normally either rosewood or ebony and furthermore the neck and tail blocks are generally mahogany and bridge plates are made once again from rosewood. But not here; the M-38 Custom we're looking at features some new players on the guitar timber scene...

BUILD QUALITY

Basically, the Lakewood M-38 Custom is a Grand Concert guitar – but that's just about where formality ends and new thinking takes over! However, first things first, I'm going to wield my measuring device once again in order to gain a little perspective on the exact dimensions of this rather attractive little guitar that I have sitting in front of me. The upper bout is approx 280mm with a lower bout of 390mm, slimming down to a waist of 230mm and a depth of 91mm at the neck and 117mm at the tail pin.

As for the looks of the instrument, it reminds me of the Catherwood we looked at last year – and that, of course, was an instrument that used woods that were indigenous to Ireland and so there is a similar theme at play here. The guitar industry as a whole is trying to wean itself off the timbers on the endangered list and so we can expect to see more guitars made from wood with unfamiliar names in the future. Different companies have their own solutions; C.F. Martin & Co., for example, is looking at synthetic materials, but more I suspect will follow the Catherwood/Lakewood model and experiment with more readily available, non-controversial local woods.

So, the top wood on the M-38 is spruce – AAA grade European spruce, to be precise and so we're still on the right side of the familiar here at least! This particular example is a very fine looking piece of wood, with a nice grain texture and a creamy white appearance that acts well with the honey coloured back and sides. Talking of which, these are both cherry with a grain pattern that I can best describe as being a bit like bleached Indian rosewood. Hopefully our pictures will allow you to see what I mean; it's plain but not unattractive and I'm told that cherry has similar sonic capabilities to maple, which should be interesting to hear a bit later on.

The body bindings are yew which here is slightly darker than the cherry and offers a nice contrast to both the back, sides and top woods.

On to the neck now and it's a two-piece flamed maple affair with a heel cap of plum – yes, plum; and we'll be returning to that in a moment, but for now the flame in the maple is particularly attractive. Maple is not an uncommon choice of wood for necks – Fender has been using it for years – and is known for its hardness and general durability. The neck profile is a widish D which feels on the thin side to the touch, but we'll see if this is a factor later on.

There are Schaller M6 tuners on the headstock with buttons from plum – don't worry, I'm coming to it shortly – and the headstock veneer is plum, too... as is the fingerboard. So I'll admit straight away that plum is a new one on me and a little bit of Googling couldn't turn up too much information about it as a guitar timber, either. It's a relatively new player in the field of luthiery – at least, for guitars – but I understand

LAKEWOOD M-38 CUSTOM

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: Lakewood
Model: M-38 Custom
Retail Price: £1,900
Body Size: Grand Concert
Made In: Germany
Top: European spruce
Back and Sides: Cherry
Neck: Flamed maple
Fingerboard: Plum
Frets: 20
Tuners: Schaller M6
Nut Width: 46mm
Scale Length: 653mm
Strings Fitted: .012 - .052
Gig Bag/Case Included: Hiscox Lakewood embossed

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: An ecologically sound, toneful little guitar
Cons: A little more bass, please!
Overall: A bold move from an established maker which has resulted in a great little instrument

ACOUSTIC RATING

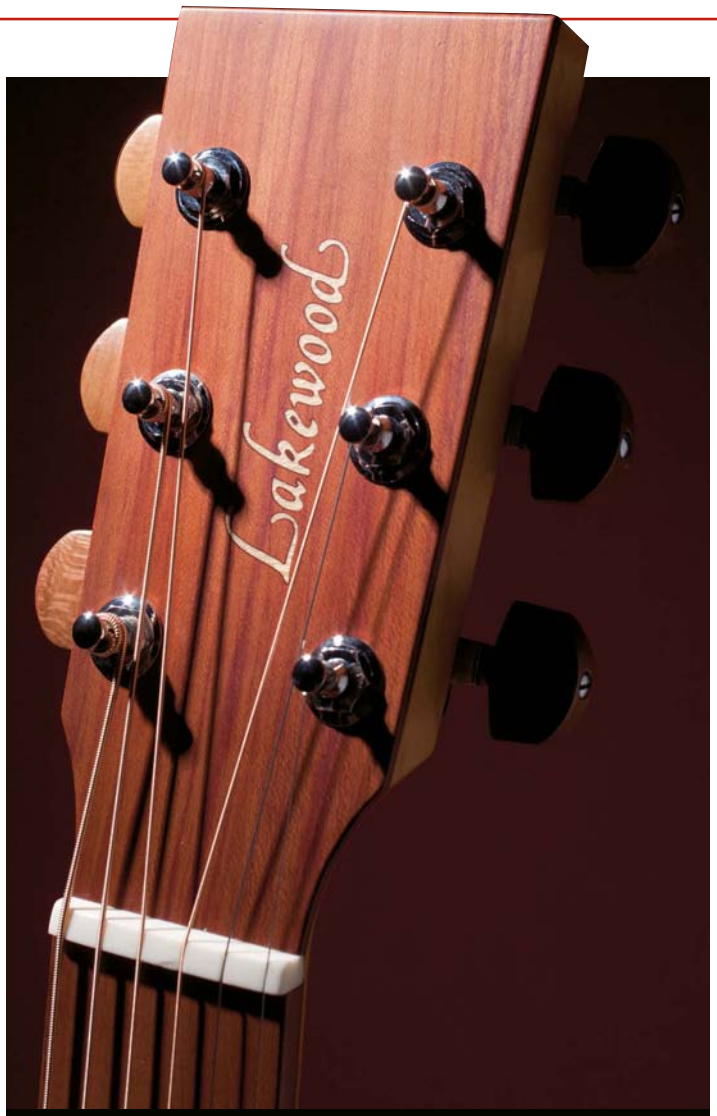
Build Quality	★★★★½
Sound Quality	★★★★
Value for Money	★★★★½

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS

Go To Guitars / Lakewood Guitars
www.lakewood-guitars.co.uk
www.gotoguitars.com

The "full European" option here is a good looking and fine sounding guitar



The tuners are Schaller M6 with – yes, you guessed it – plum buttons

from Lakewood that it is hard wearing and eminently suitable as a playing surface. Of course, its reddish brown colour, where you might be more used to seeing either dark rosewood or black ebony, is very much a subjective issue. How do I feel about it? At this stage, I find it interesting, let's put it that way; but I look forward to seeing what I think about it when it's under my fingers shortly. However you look at it, I think Lakewood was wise to forgo the use of fretboard markers as I think leaving it plain is the best choice, aesthetically speaking.

It's plum once again for the bridge, end pin and string pegs and so if you've noticed any theme at all prevailing here, you'd very probably be right. Plum, all the way!

SOUND QUALITY

The M-38 is quite light to hold and that D shaped neck profile is a comfortable in the hand. There was something about this guitar that said to me "DADGAD, please" from the start and so I began by retuning it accordingly. I'm always quite excited to hear new combinations of tonewood, playing guessing games as to how it might sound and from the first note any doubts I may have had about the presence of plum here were dispelled. The Lakewood has a very pleasing, light and airy voice – I think that the conventional wisdom about cherry being very similar to maple must be spot on because there is the same distinct sweet openness here, too. The trebles shine and there is quite a dynamic range on hand, as well. If I wanted to hear more of anything it would be bass; what's here is perfectly adequate, but it doesn't quite shake, rattle and roll in the way I like it. This might be something that changes a little as the spruce opens up, but only time will tell. In all respects though, it's very easy to forget about what woods have been employed here and just enjoy the sound of the guitar. The plum doesn't feel any different to rosewood, so it's welcome here.

If "new" timbers sound as good as this, then we've nothing to worry about

CONCLUSION

No one would exactly call me an eco-warrior, but I'm as aware as anyone that the current controversy with tropical woods isn't going to go away and that we're going to see more experimentation with new and unusual timbers as the years pass. It's a thing that definitely has to happen and if the results are as good as I find here then I'm confident that the future of acoustic tone is in safe hands. Offering a "full European" option isn't a gimmick, it's a statement that has resulted in a good looking, fine sounding guitar!

David Mead

PROMENADE MUSIC

01524 410 202
www.promenademusic.co.uk

6 String Acoustics

13028 - Atkin 'The Forty Three' J45
13027 - Atkin AA Deluxe Custom OOO FiguredWalnut
13022 - Atkin OO Am Special Parlour Guitar
13189 - Brook Tamar Medium Jumbo Handmade
13188 - Brook Taw OM Size Handmade Guitar
13234 - Brook Torridge, Hand Made Guitar, Used
4612 - Dave King Katrina OOO Model, Sunburst
4613 - Dave King Louise, Koa, Parlour, Natural
13017 - Epiphone AJ220S Acoustic Guitar, Natural
13016 - Epiphone AJ220S Guitar, Vintage Sunburst
4293 - Epiphone DR100 Dreadnought, Sunburst
12332 - Faith FKM Mercury
9533 - Faith FM Mercury Parlour Guitar
12331 - Faith FRMG Mars Drop Shoulder Dread.
10245 - Fender CD60 Acoustic Guitar, Mahogany
13213 - Gibson J185 Acoustic Guitar, Secondhand
12648 - Gibson J200 Montana Gold Acoustic Guitar
7090 - K Yairi New Yorker NY0021BSB, Sunburst
7970 - LAG T300D Dreadnought, Satin Finish
12652 - Lakewood D14 Dreadnought Acoustic Guitar
9184 - Lakewood D18 Dreadnought, Natural
9183 - Lakewood D32 Acoustic Guitar, Natural
12649 - Lakewood M14 Grand Concert
12655 - Lakewood M18 Grand Concert
8308 - Levin SW203 Acoustic Guitar in Black
8310 - Levin SW203Acoustic Guitar in Natural
10905 - Martin 00018, Inc Hard Case
13064 - Martin D18 Dreadnought, Secondhand
6554 - Martin D18 Dreadnought, Natural
5702 - Martin D28 Dreadnought, Natural
9342 - Northwood M80 12
13133 - Ozark Grand Auditorium 3760 Deluxe, Used
7253 - PJ Eggle Linville C, OM Cutaway, Natural
12450 - Peavey JDAG1 Jack Daniel's Guitar, Black
10225 - Seagull Coastline S6 Folk Cedar Acoustic
10228 - Seagull Entourage Rustic QI Electro, SB
11149 - Seagull Excursion Natural Folk SG
11148 - Seagull Excursion Natural Grand SG
10230 - Seagull S6 Original
13121 - Tanglewood TW28 STAV
9587 - Tanglewood TSJ XFM Super Jumbo
7988 - Tanglewood TW133
4195 - Tanglewood TW15 ASM, Solid Mahogany
9570 - Tanglewood TW40 DAN Dreadnought
10416 - Taylor 410 Acoustic, Natural, Pre-Owned
4419 - Vintage V1100N Dreadnought, Natural
13081 - Vintage V2000MGG Acoustic Guitar
10929 - Vintage VE2000DLX Gordon Giltrap
6016 - Westcoast AG2 Acoustic Guitar in Natural
12256 - Westcoast AG2F
8303 - Westcoast SW201 Acoustic Guitar in Black
10930 - Westcoast SW201 Acoustic Guitar, Natural
8304 - Westcoast SW201 Acoustic, Sunburst
10932 - Westcoast SW201 Acoustic Redburst
12437 - Yairi FY84 OM Folk Acoustic Guitar
12428 - Yairi Rag 65 Small Parlour Guitar

6 String Electro Acoustics

8035 - Breedlove AJ250/SF Plus Electro Acoustic
10284 - Breedlove Cascade C25/CRE Electro
10285 - Breedlove Cascade OM/CRe Soft Cutaway
10287 - Breedlove Passport C250/COe Electro
10978 - Breedlove Passport C250CMe Electro, Nat
13205 - Breedlove Passport D20e Electro Acoustic
10288 - Breedlove Passport DMMe Electro Acoustic
10292 - Breedlove Passport Plus C250/SBe Electro
10294 - Breedlove Retro D/ERe with LR Baggs
10976 - Breedlove Revival DSMe Electro Sunburst
10918 - Breedlove USA Gold D/SRE
10069 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Black
10068 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Cherry
10071 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Red
10070 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Sunburst
4769 - EKO Ranger EQ Vintage Series, Black
9179 - Epiphone Dave Navarro "Jane" Ac/Electric
11135 - Epiphone Dove Pro Electro-Acoustic
11134 - Epiphone PR4E Ltd Electro Acoustic Pack
10987 - Faith FECN Neptune Baby Jumbo Electro Bk
8300 - Faith FECS Electro Acoustic Guitar
12334 - Faith FKNE Naked Neptune Electro
12358 - Faith FKV Venus Concert Cutaway/Electro
9543 - Faith FSCETB Saturn Dreadnought Electro
13216 - Faith Jupiter Jumbo, Secondhand
12360 - Fender Avril Lavigne Newporter
10320 - Fender CD60CE Mahogany Electro Acoustic
6929 - Fender Stratacoustic Electro Acoustic Bk
10243 - Fender Tim Armstrong Dlx Electro
12671 - Fender Tony Alva Sonoran SCE,
6142 - Gibson Hummingbird in Sunburst
13169 - Gibson LC1 Cascade, V. Sunburst, Used
10143 - Gibson LG2 American Eagle
10419 - Gibson Southern Jumbo Electro, Sunburst

6 String Electro Acoustics

12466 - Guild X30 Electro Acoustic Guitar, Used
4555 - Jimmy Moon Bryan Adams Signature
4554 - Jimmy Moon PF0003 Electro, Pau Ferro B&S
6948 - Jimmy Moon RD3, Electro, Natural
5602 - K Yairi WY1 Natural
9552 - LAG T300AE Electro Acoustic Guitar
9551 - Lag T300DCE Electro Acoustic Guitar
9547 - Lag T400DCE Dreadnought Electro Acoustic
12327 - Lag TN100A14CEBLK Electro Acoustic
12666 - Lakewood A14 CP
9186 - Lakewood D14CP Electro Acoustic, Natural
12674 - Lakewood J14 Baritone Jumbo Electro
12672 - Lakewood J14CP Jumbo Electro
12658 - Lakewood M14 CP
12678 - Lakewood M18 Grand Concert Electro
12679 - Lakewood Sungha Jung Signature Electro
10912 - Levin 2006 Shallow Body Electro Acoustic
5407 - Levin LS500CE, Small Electro, Blue
5406 - Levin LS600CE, Small Electro, Natural
8313 - Levin SW203-CETU Electro Acoustic Black
10933 - Levin SW203CETU Electro Acoustic S'burst
12696 - Maestro Raffles Flame Maple Cust Electro
12702 - Maestro Raffles IR-CSB Small Jumbo Electro
12790 - Maestro Raffles MDT Small Jumbo Electro
12789 - Maestro Raffles Monkey Pod Electro
12701 - Maestro Rosetta IR Dreadnought Electro
13211 - Maestro Rosetta IR Dreadnought Electro
12792 - Maestro Rosetta MDT Dreadnought Electro
12596 - Maestro Rosetta with fitted LR Baggs
12793 - Maestro Rosetta MRDT Dreadnought Electro
12791 - Maestro Rosetta SR Dreadnought Electro
13212 - Maestro Singa Flame Maple Custom Electro
12594 - Maestro Singa Handmade Electro Acoustic
12699 - Maestro Singa K-CSB-K Koa Jumbo Electro
13209 - Maestro Singa MRDT Medium Jumbo Electro
13207 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
13208 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
13055 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
12783 - Maestro Victoria MR OOO with LR Baggs
10906 - Martin DXM Electro Acoustic Guitar, Nat
8039 - Martin GPCPA4 Electro Acoustic, Natural
12439 - Northwood Custom Koa 80D Electro
12438 - Northwood Custom Myrtle 80 Series D/nought
11245 - Northwood M80-OM Electro Acoustic Guitar
4400 - Northwood R80, 000V Electro, Natural
6403 - Northwood R80, 0M Electro, Natural
11247 - Northwood R80-MJ Electro Acoustic Guitar
11246 - Northwood R80-OO Electro Acoustic Guitar
11249 - Northwood R80-OO12 Acoustic Guitar
12472 - Ovation 6868 Elite Standardm Secondhand
12552 - Ovation Applause AE128 in Natural
10034 - Ovation CC24 HB Celebrity Honey Burst
12534 - Ovation CC24S in Natural
10033 - Ovation Celebrity CC44S AB, Autumn Burst
10031 - Ovation Pro Elite 2078AX
10095 - RainSong BI-JM1000N2 Graphite Guitar
10094 - Rainsong S-DR1000 Graphite Guitar
10038 - Rainsong S-DR1000 Graphite Guitar
9820 - Rainsong CO-DR1000N2
9821 - Rainsong CO-JM1000N2
9819 - Rainsong CO-OM1000N2
9818 - Rainsong CO-WS1000N2
9814 - Rainsong DR1000 Graphite Guitar
10097 - Rainsong H-DR1100N2
10100 - Rainsong H-OM1000N2
10098 - Rainsong H-WS1000N2
9815 - Rainsong JM1000 Graphite Guitar
4812 - RainSong OM1000
10082 - RainSong P12 Parlor
10084 - RainSong P12 Parlor in Blue
10086 - RainSong P12 Parlor in Green
10085 - RainSong P12 Parlor in Pewter
10087 - RainSong P12 Parlor in Red
10088 - RainSong P14 Parlor
10091 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Blue
10092 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Green
10093 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Pewter
10089 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Red
9824 - Rainsong S-DR1000N2 Dreadnought Studio
9823 - Rainsong S-OM1000N2 OM Studio Electro
9822 - Rainsong S-WS1000N2 WS Studio Electro
9827 - RainSong SG Shorty Gloss Shorty Series
9828 - RainSong Shorty Fine Texture SFT Model
7974 - Rainsong WS1000 Graphite Guitar
5257 - Satori YD18EQ, Dreadnought Electro, Nat
5256 - Satori YD28EQ, Dreadnought Electro, Nat
8234 - Satori YD42EQ Electro Acoustic, Vint Nat
5255 - Satori YO28HEQ, OM Electro, Natural
5253 - Satori YO42EQ, OM Electro, Natural
12577 - Seagull Artist Mosaic Cutaway Folk Deluxe QII
12546 - Seagull Coastline Grand QI Electro Acoustic
9536 - Sigma 000MC 15E Electro Acoustic Guitar
13148 - Takamine EG520 Electro Acoustic, Used
12236 - Takamine EN20C Electro Acoustic
13010 - Tanglewood DBT SJCE NG In Natural
9602 - Tanglewood DBTSFCE Quilted Purple
12301 - Tanglewood TW15 CENS
4188 - Tanglewood TW40 DANE Dreadnought
4187 - Tanglewood TW40 OANE Orchestra
8330 - Tanglewood TW40SD VSE in Vin/Sunburst
9607 - Tanglewood TW45-HSRE Electro Acoustic
7989 - Tanglewood TW47E
8293 - Tanglewood TW55NSB Electro Acoustic, Nat
12304 - Tanglewood TW73 VSE
9200 - Tanglewood TWRTE Travel Guitar
12372 - Taylor 512CE Electro Acoustic, Used
8007 - Vintage Gordon Giltrap Signature
13082 - Vintage VE660VB Electro-Acoustic Guitar
9535 - Walden CG570CE Electro Acoustic Guitar
10931 - Westcoast SW201 VT Electro, Sunburst
8307 - Westcoast SW201VT Electro Acoustic Black
8306 - Westcoast SW201-VT Electro Acoustic, Nat
0000 - Yamaha - 5 models in stock now

Classical Guitars

13023 - Admira Almeria Classical Guitar
13026 - Admira Concerto Classical Guitar
13024 - Admira Espana Electro Classical Guitar
13025 - Admira Malaga Classical Guitar
13019 - Admira Sevilla Spanish Guitars
13021 - Admira Virtuoso Classical Guitar
8587 - Azahar Model 105 Cadete Classical
8590 - Azahar Model 31A Classical Guitar
6031 - Azahar Model 40B Classical Guitar
7366 - Jose Ferrer 1/2 Classical Guitar
7365 - Jose Ferrer 3/4 Size Classical, Natural
12622 - Jose Ferrer 4/4 Full-Size Classical
0000 - Mendieta - 8 models in stock now
5360 - Ramirez 125 Year Aniversary
6029 - Ramirez 1NE Classical Guitar
6335 - Ramirez 2E Classical Guitar
6028 - Ramirez 4E Classical Guitar
5251 - Ramirez AE Classical Guitar
5644 - Ramirez George Harrison Model
6337 - Ramirez R1 Classical Guitar
6336 - Ramirez R2 Classical Guitar
8357 - Ramirez R4 Classical Guitar
6027 - Ramirez S1 Classical Guitar
12761 - Ramirez SP Classical Guitar
5828 - Roberto 4/4 Classical Guitar
6442 - Roberto C1 Classical Guitar With Bag
6441 - Roberto C2 Classical Guitar
9483 - Tanglewood DBT34 3/4 Classical Guitar
12302 - Tanglewood TCMR1 Classical Guitar
10999 - Westcoast Student 4/4 Classical, Red

12 Strings

13102 - Breedlove AC25 SR Plus 12-String, Used
6228 - Breedlove AC250/SM12 Concert Bodied
10280 - Breedlove Atlas AC250SM 12-String
6941 - EKO Ranger 12 String, Natural Satin
12227 - Eko 12 String Guitar, Secondhand
9553 - Lag T200D12 12 String Acoustic Guitar
8322 - Levin SW206CETU 12 Strg Ele/Acoustic
9816 - Rainsong JM3000 Classic Series Electro
9817 - Rainsong WS3000 Classic Series Electro
10991 - Tanglewood TRD12 Lefty 12 Nat
12706 - Washburn D42S 12 12 String Guitar

Mandolin Family

8810 - Ashbury AM-11 Mandolin (Army and Navy)
8826 - Ashbury AM-325 Octave Mandola
8824 - Ashbury AM-370 Mandolin
13146 - Cort CMF100 Mandolin, Vintage Sunburst
12568 - Fender FM63S Acoustic Mandolin, Sunburst
12540 - Fender FM63SE Electro Acoustic Mandolin
10191 - Fender Mando-Strat Electric Mandolin
4551 - Jimmy Moon A Plus E Electro, Natural
9240 - Jimmy Moon A2 Acoustic Mandolin, Natural
4564 - Jimmy Moon A Plus Electro Bouzouki, Nat
4563 - Jimmy Moon Octave Mandolin (Mandola) Nat
4553 - Jimmy Moon Standard Mandolin
10196 - Maestro Electric Mandolin, Pre-Owned
12322 - Ortega RMA50VY Mandolin Vintage Yellow
10018 - Ozark Celtic Flatback Octave Mandola Nat
9430 - Ozark Flat Back Bouzouki
8315 - Westcoast M20 Mandolin Sunburst
12347 - Westcoast M20S Mandolin Sunburst
8316 - Westcoast M50E Electro Mandolin

Travel Guitars

13205 - Breedlove Passport D20e Electro Acoustic
13217 - Maestro IR3 CSB A Meridian Travel Guitar
5835 - Martin Backpacker Acoustic Travel Guitar
12389 - Martin LX1E Ed Sheeran Custom Edition
7320 - Martin LX1E, Electro Travel Guitar
9588 - Tanglewood TW15 Baby All Solid Travel
9200 - Tanglewood TWRTE Travel Guitar
13128 - Vintage VTR800PB Viator Travel Guitar

Ukuleles

12564 - Barnes & Mullins BJ306 6-String Banjo
4371 - Barnes & Mullins UBJ1 Banjo Ukulele
8209 - Delta Blue Ukulele Banjo
8208 - Delta Blue DUB2F Ukulele Banjo
0000 - Fender - 2 models in stock now
13065 - Iberica Concert Special Ukelele
13066 - Iberica Soprano Special Ukulele, Acacia
13067 - Iberica Soprano Special Ukulele, Walnut
12338 - Iuke Piccolo Standard Ukulele Inc Gigbag
9196 - Java TUU1 Concert Ukulele
9709 - Kahana Soprano Ukulele Inc Bag, in Black
9708 - Kahana Soprano Ukulele Inc Bag, in Blue
9705 - Kahana Soprano Ukulele, Various Colours
9706 - Kahana Soprano Ukulele, Red
12800 - Kala KA-BNU/BK-C Concert Banjo Ukulele
12799 - Kala KA-BNU/BK-S Soprano Banjo Ukulele
12798 - Kala KA-JTE/2TSG Tenor Ukulele Sunburst
12797 - Kala KA-JTE/HB Tenor Ukulele Honeyburst
9345 - Kala U Bass Electro Ac In Solid Mahogany
8127 - Kala U Bass in Mahogany
4722 - Kala U-Bass 2 Electro Acoustic Ukulele
12285 - Lag U100C Concert Ukulele
13085 - Magic Fluke M10 Nat Fluke Concert Uke
10955 - Magic Fluke M20 Natural Fluke Tenor Uke
13086 - Magic Fluke M40 Mango Flea Concert Uke
10957 - Magic Fluke M80 Firefly Maple Ukulele Banjo
13084 - Magic Fluke M80 Maple Uke Banjo, Hwood
10958 - Magic Fluke M80 Walnut Uke Banjo
10956 - Magic Flute M30 Mango Flea Soprano Uke
5010 - Mahalo UTL1 Soprano Ukulele
9297 - Mahalo UTL1E, Vintage Sunburst
8514 - Ohana BK10 Baritone Ukulele
8515 - Ohana BK20 Baritone Ukulele
12610 - Ohana BK22 Baritone Ukulele
7101 - Ohana BK35 Baritone Ukulele
12609 - Ohana BKB35E Bass Ukulele
7102 - Ohana CK10S Concert Ukulele in Mahogany
12607 - Ohana CK15W Concert Ukulele
12605 - Ohana CK15Z Concert Ukulele
9050 - Ohana CK20CE Concert Uke
4466 - Ohana CK20S Concert Ukulele
8518 - Ohana CK25S All Solid Concert Ukulele
12604 - Ohana CK35 Concert Ukulele
8520 - Ohana CK35CE Electro Concert Ukulele
12603 - Ohana CK38 Concert Ukulele
8513 - Ohana CK50MG Concert Ukulele
8508 - Ohana PK10S Soprano Ukulele Pineapple
8509 - Ohana SK10CR Soprano Ukulele, Cherry Red
4712 - Ohana SK10S Soprano Ukulele
7099 - Ohana SK15BLK Soprano Ukulele in Black
7095 - Ohana SK15-RD Soprano Ukulele in Red
4711 - Ohana SK20S Soprano Ukulele Uke
8517 - Ohana SK22Z Sop Ukulele Zebrawood B&S
4710 - Ohana SK25 Soprano Ukulele
12183 - Ohana SK350G Soprano Ukulele
4715 - Ohana SK35G Solid Mahogany Gloss
9529 - Ohana SK50MG Soprano Ukulele
4714 - Ohana SK50WG Soprano Ukulele
7108 - Ohana SK70MG Soprano Ukulele
7106 - Ohana SK75 Soprano Ukulele
7107 - Ohana SK75R Soprano Ukulele
12608 - Ohana SKS15E Slim Electro Soprano Uke
4708 - Ohana TK10 Tenor Ukulele
4465 - Ohana TK20 Tenor Ukulele
12611 - Ohana TK38 Tenor Ukulele
12390 - Ohana Soprano Uke Gig Bag
12310 - Ortega RU5 Concert Ukulele
5009 - Ozark Ukulele Banjo
12522 - Recording King RU998 Resonator Ukulele
12740 - ResoVille Weeki Wachee Resonator Ukulele
0000- Risa - 5 models in stock now
9639 - Stagg USX SPA Soprano Uke Spalted Maple
10426 - Uluru I III Tenor Ukulele
12189 - Uluru Koa II Concert Ukulele
10427 - Uluru Koa III Tenor Ukulele
13063 - Uluru KoholaConcert Ukulele
10424 - Uluru Lehua I Soprano Ukulele
10425 - Uluru II Concert Ukulele
10433 - Uluru Pukana LA IIC Cutaway Concert Uke
13033 - Vox Ukelectric 33 Ukulele, Blackburst

Acoustic Amplification

5709 - AER AG8 Powered 60w Extension Monitor
5706 - AER Acoustic.ube III - 120w, 1x8"
5712 - AER Alpha - 40W, 1x8"
5193 - AER Alpha Plus - 50W, 1x8"
5705 - AER Basic Performer Acoustic Bass Amp
5704 - AER Basscube 550W Acoustic Bass Amp
5710 - AER Compact 60 Mk2 Hardwood - 60W, 1x8
9494 - AER Compact 60 Mk III
5707 - AER Compact Classic Pro - 60W, 1x8"
5708 - AER Compact 60 Mk2 Mobile - 60W, 1x8
4945 - AER Compact XL - 200W, 2x8"
9028 - AER Domino 3 200w Watt Acoustic Amp
0000 - Acus One - 9 models in stock now
10496 - Fender Acoustasonic 15 Acoustic Amp
8166 - Fender Acoustasonic 150 Acoustic Combo
0000- Fishman - 6 models in stock now
9711 - Laney LA12C Acoustic Amp Combo
6770 - Marshall AS100D - 50W+50W, 2x8"
6771 - Marshall AS50D - 50W, 2x8"
4573 - Peavey Ecoustic E20 - 20W, 1x8"
4572 - Peavey Ecoustic E208 - 20W, 2x8"
4976 - Roland - 7 models in stock now
13018 - Tanglewood T3 30W Acoustic Amplifier
9522 - Vox AGA70 Acoustic Amp Combo
10937 - Yamaha THR5A Acoustic Amp

For full guitar details, pricing and photos, enter the number next to each guitar model into our SKU search facility on the website.

TAYLOR 810

Can a great guitar get even better? Alun Lower finds out how Taylor is trying to improve on perfection...

I had a thought-provoking debate with a fellow guitarist recently. Having just laid his hands on a stunning, handmade guitar produced by a reasonably well-known UK luthier, he was now of the belief that the average punter "must be mad" to spend their hard earned on a top-flight acoustic "manufactured" by a big-name guitar company. Gibson, Martin and Taylor were just three such brands that no longer met the expectations of this particular gent and his (admittedly stunning) new squeeze. For a moment, I wondered whether or not he was right. I love an underdog and I'm always overjoyed when, as a reviewer, I have the opportunity to try out a guitar that matches or even exceeds the standards set by these goliaths of the guitar biz. Of course, common sense returned me from my madness before too long. Anyone that underestimates the dedication and craftsmanship that goes into creating these companies and their enviable reputations is being utterly ridiculous. Sure enough, before you could even utter the phrase "box-shifters", a wager was on. All I needed now was a prime example to prove me right.

How fortunate for me, then, that Taylor should introduce a complete revamp of their talismanic 800 Series – a run of guitars designed to showcase the classic rosewood and spruce combination at its very finest. Anyone that has had the pleasure of playing one of these guitars will know that they were already pretty damn good to begin with – a showcase of Taylor's dedication to immaculate build quality and unrelenting pursuit of tone. But what is there left to improve?

BUILD QUALITY

Well, according to Taylor, just about everything, as it turns out. From the more obvious cosmetic adornments to the subtleties of bracing, it seems that not a single stone has been left unturned in Taylor's quest to drive the 800 Series towards the apex of its evolution. The visual impact upon opening the case for the first time cannot be overstated. The rosewood pickguard for one is a new addition and one I much prefer it to a slice of faux tortoiseshell. It's just that little bit more decadent and luxurious without bordering on gaudy. A bit of trivia – Taylor matches the grain of the pickguard to each guitar's back and sides, and the angle is positioned strategically to minimise pick wear.

The spruce top is a magnificent example as you would expect, and another aspect of the redesign concerns the binding that blends the top so expertly with the gorgeous rosewood back and sides. The primary ingredient is pale maple, chosen without any curling or flaming so as to retain a clear, precise aesthetic. It works a treat and has been further accented by immaculately cut layers of rosewood purfling. Andy Powers, the luthier who helped mastermind the redesign of the 800 Series, likens the rosewood detailing to a picture frame, and that's a pretty accurate comparison – it really does look the business and enhances the overall outline of the body. The detailing continues to the soundhole also, where a circle of green abalone is once again surrounded by rosewood – even the inner edge of the soundhole cutout appears to have had hours of attention poured upon it.

Even the gloss finish used on the body of the guitar deserves a mention. While Taylor's previous gloss finishes have all weighed in at a fairly standard six millimetres, the company has somehow managed to reduce this down to a mere three and a half. Indeed, casting an eye over the always-marvellous Taylor neck join shows that really there is an almost indiscernible difference between the satin of the neck and the gloss of the body, with almost no overlap and certainly no sloppy build-up to be seen.

The mahogany neck is superbly finished and comes with its own cosmetic flourishes. For some time now Taylor has co-owned an ebony mill in Cameroon, making conservation and sustainability an important watchword in their more recent designs. While most guitar makers will only touch ebony with a perfectly dark, piano-black quality, Taylor has fully embraced the varied colouration that appears on cuts that many guitar companies would simply discard. The end result is a fingerboard that not only plays and sounds the part but also looks striking, organic and, well, beautiful. Why more guitar companies don't make the best use of these wonderful woods is absolutely beyond me, but perhaps it's something we'll start to see more frequently in the near future. Elsewhere on the fingerboard, there are some lovely new green abalone inlays inspired by Taylor's classic diamond-shaped decorations, and the crisp pale maple binding leads up to the immaculate Taylor headstock, beautifully finished and inlaid with the company's logo.

Stepping off from the Tusq nut and following it down to the Micarta saddle, our journey takes us once again down to the 810's body, but this time to look at the internals. What's particularly interesting about the way the new 800 Series has been engineered is that each model comes with its own individual tweaks and measurements – our dread won't have the same wood thickness as a Grand Symphony for example, and likewise the bracing has been adapted to optimise the tonal response and characteristics that each of these body shapes is known for. Even the glue

TAYLOR 810

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: Taylor
Model: 810
Retail Price: £2,519
Body Size: Dreadnought
Made In: USA
Top: Sitka spruce
Back and Sides: Indian rosewood
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Ebony
Frets: 20
Tuners: Taylor nickel
Neck Width: 1-3/4"
Scale Length: 25-1/2"
Strings Fitted: Elixir phosphor bronze medium
Gig Bag/Case Included: Deluxe hardcase

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Piano-like response, loud, clear, articulate – everything you'd want in a guitar of this quality
Cons: Lack of electronics, other than that absolutely none at all
Overall: An outstanding guitar that every player should try at least once

ACOUSTIC RATING

Build Quality	✪✪✪✪✪
Sound Quality	✪✪✪✪✪
Value for Money	✪✪✪✪

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS

Taylor Guitars
www.taylorguitars.com

After a bold redesign, the new Taylor 800 Series leaves no stone unturned

The single most impressive thing about the tone of the 810 is how loud it is

holding the guitar together (animal protein glue in this instance) supposedly has an effect on the sound you hear. It's easy to be sceptical, but it's clear Taylor has taken this very seriously and stands firm behind its assertions.

All that remains now is to find out whether all these improvements are just for show or whether they translate into some kind of tangible musical benefit.

SOUND QUALITY

It's not often I can be certain that guitar is going to sound good before I've even played a note, but I have to admit that on this occasion that's exactly what happened. Reading up on Andy Powers' views on dreadnoughts on Taylor's website, I agreed with his opinions on many levels in the way that so many dreadnoughts can sound, well, a little flat. Sure, there's the big low-end punch and rich mids – but high-end quality is something that tends to stand out on smaller, curvier models (which is why the Grand Auditorium has always been my preferred Taylor body shape, personally). However, when I first unpacked the 810 and let my hand fall down over the strings at the bridge, I was immediately struck by the strength and clarity of the resulting boom that found its way out of the soundhole to greet me. It's a difficult sensation to describe, but that one moment implied that the 810 was about to school me on just what a dreadnought can accomplish. And after losing several days in a haze of what I can only describe as tonal nirvana, I'm left in no doubt that the 810 is no ordinary dread.

The single most impressive thing about the tone is really just how powerful it is. You really do get a sense that this guitar has lungs like Pavarotti and just wants to sing with all its heart. The low-end punch is everything a high-end dreadnought owner should expect – plenty of oomph, piano-like clarity and a foundation for creating massive chords that push every note toward the audience at a rate of knots (no pun intended). But when you hit those higher strings, you suddenly find yourself met by the bell-like chime that makes a concert or parlour guitar so utterly intoxicating. It shouldn't belong on a dreadnought - but it's right there. And it is glorious.

The purely acoustic experience it utterly sublime, offering truly exceptional balance across the strings and a seemingly endless array of harmonic overtones at every turn. Every chord, every note is drenched in tone, responding effortlessly to every nuance of your attack and playing style.

CONCLUSION

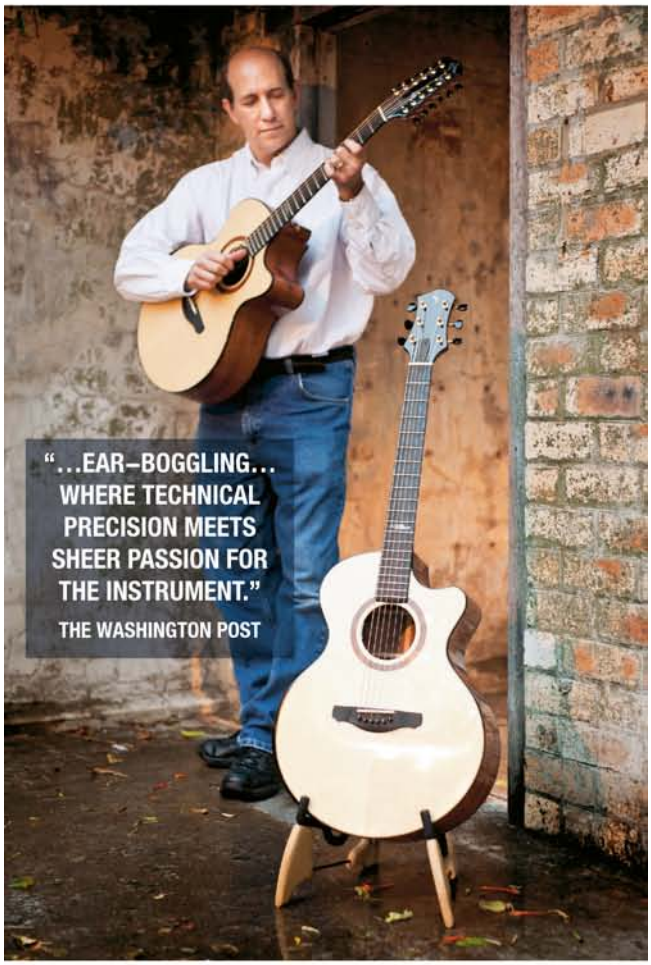
As my time with the 810 came to an end, I found myself extremely conflicted about the fact that I would have to ship this guitar back to Taylor. On the one hand, I was having to say goodbye to one of (if not the) best dreadnoughts I've ever played. But on the other, if I had kept the guitar back then I would have to be equally fearful of my other guitars springing to life in the night and murdering the poor thing in its sleep, out of sheer envy.

In all seriousness, the 810 shows just what can be accomplished when a company with the resources and experience of Taylor puts its mind into improving what 99% of the guitar-playing world would have identified as a damn near un-improvable guitar. The knowledge and craftsmanship poured into this instrument is palpable, and I challenge any jaded guitarists among you to get out there and give one a spin. If you have the cash to spend on a serious guitar, you need to try out the Taylor 800 Series. It's as simple as that. And yes, I believe I've won my bet.

Alun Lower

Richard Gilewitz

Richard Gilewitz



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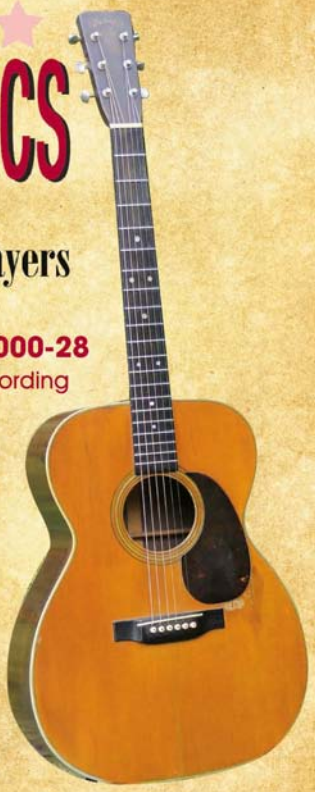

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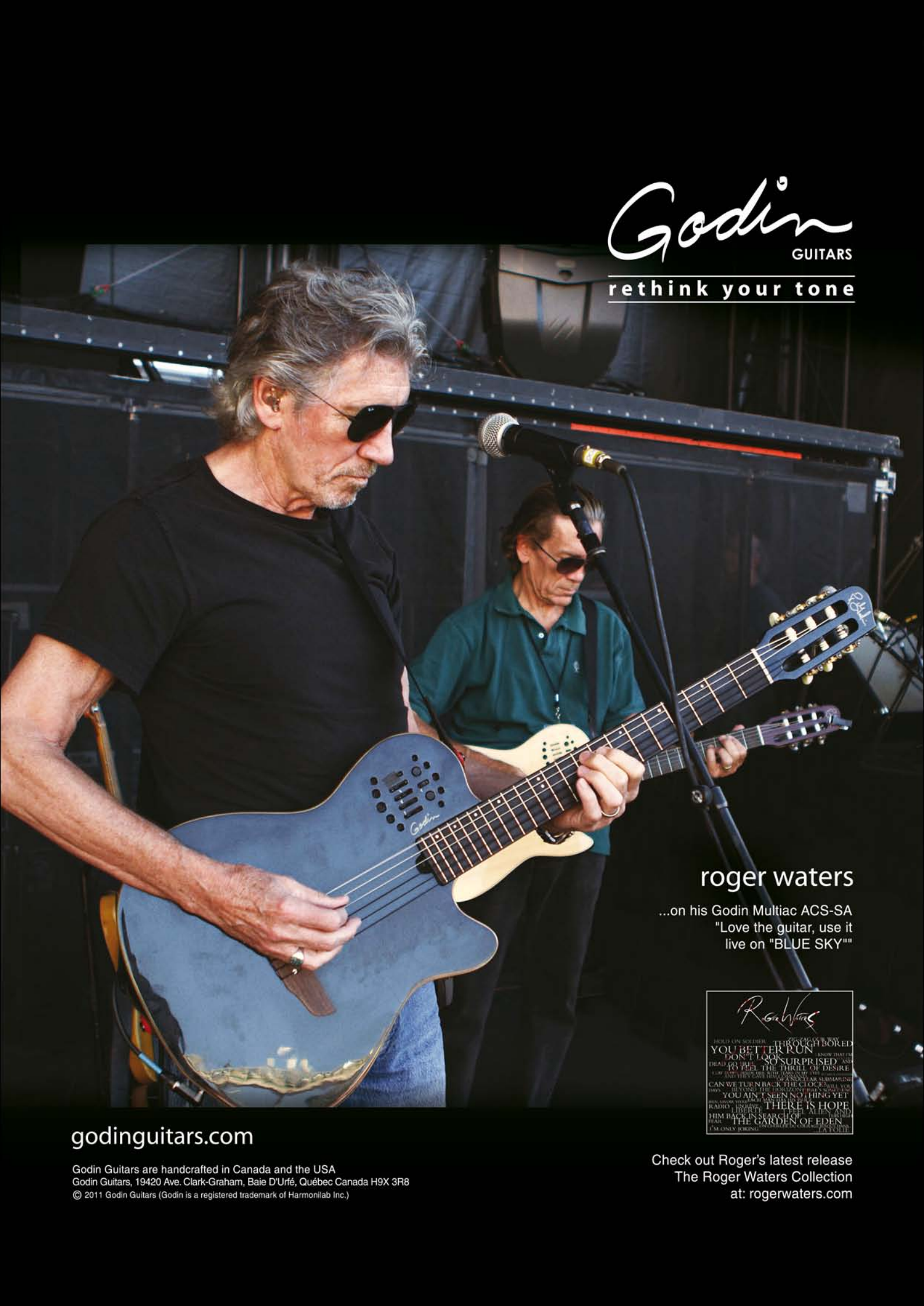
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FAITH NEPTUNE

The humble all-mahogany acoustic gets a sharp makeover courtesy of Patrick James Eggle and Faith Guitars. Alun Lower takes a look...

Think of an all-mahogany acoustic, and what comes to mind? I for one nearly always envisage an old-timey dreadnought or possibly even a parlour. Simple, restrained and built for the kinds of no-frills music that comes straight from the gut. Of course, this isn't always the case, but I'll admit to being a little unsure about whether an all-mahogany Faith Neptune, designed by none other than superstar UK luthier Patrick James Eggle, would engage me in quite the same way.

FAITH NEPTUNE

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: Faith
Model: Neptune Mahogany FNCEMG
Retail Price: £799
Body Size: Baby Jumbo
Made In: Indonesia
Top: Solid mahogany
Back and Sides: Solid mahogany
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Macassan figured ebony
Frets: 20
Tuners: Grover Rotomatics
Nut Width: 43mm
Scale Length: 650mm
Electronics: Shadow Nanoflex II
Strings Fitted: Elixir
Left Handers: Yes
Gig Bag/Case Included: Hardcase

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Great tone, playability, electronics – all from a trusted brand
Cons: Not much; personally, a satin finish would be lovely
Overall: A great guitar that's not going to break that bank. Amateurs and pros alike will love it

ACOUSTIC RATING

Build Quality	★★★★
Sound Quality	★★★★½
Value for Money	★★★★

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS

Faith Guitars / Barnes and Mullins
www.faithguitars.com
www.bandm.co.uk

BUILD QUALITY

As I have now come to expect from Faith, the all-mahogany Neptune arrived in a beautiful hardcase (included with the asking price) lined with a reddish, copper-brown faux fur that matches up with the hue of the mahogany really rather nicely. A lovely touch right from the outset that really made me want to pick up and play. As for the guitar itself – it sports a completely solid wood construction (just like every other guitar in Faith's ever-expanding catalogue) – in this instance, Indonesian mahogany. This is supported under the top by Patrick James Eggle-designed bracing constructed from quarter-sawn mahogany and accented between the joins by some very tasteful ebony binding. There's a small, five millimetre rosette of abalone lining the soundhole, adding just a little bit of extravagance without diving too far into the realms of the ornate and showy. The body is then finished in gloss – personally, I tend to prefer satin finishes on all-mahogany guitars but there's no denying that the finish itself has been extremely well-applied, with no nasty build-up or uneven sections to be found. The body itself (described as a baby jumbo) also feels very well balanced and weighted – just the right balance between bulky and curvy, with the cutaway providing excellent fret access to boot.

The neck, also made from mahogany, has been finished in satin to create a better playing surface. Again, the quality of the finishing really is excellent, even for this price, providing a smooth, even playing experience and never clashing with the glossy finish that adorns the body. Topping the neck is a lovely slab of Macassan figured ebony, inlaid only with a mother of pearl "F" at the twelfth fret. Minimalist and classy, through and through. The Faith headstock is as clean and elegant as it's ever been, in this instance topped also with a veneer of rosewood and black machine heads (Grover Rotomatics, in case you were wondering). The TUSQ nut then leads us all the way down to a Macassan ebony bridge, with a set of ebony bridge pins fitted to match, each topped with a small circle of abalone.

Last but by no means least, Faith has also fitted the guitar with Shadow's Performer preamp partnered with a Nanoflex II undersaddle pickup. It's a great little unit that offers the basic volume, treble and bass controls you'd expect along with a phase switch for tackling feedback and an accurate, easy-to-read tuner that dispenses with the dim LCD screens of some rivals in favour of crisp, bright LEDs. The one thing to consider here is that the more sophisticated Shadow L4020HEX preamp is available on some other Faith models. That particular unit offers individual control over every string, so if you're particularly fussy about your live sound then you may want to check those out, too.

SOUND QUALITY

Before this review, I can't say that I can recall ever playing an all-mahogany jumbo before, let alone a baby jumbo, so I was very interested to see how this guitar would perform in practice. As I mentioned before, it's just not quite the shape and style I would expect from a configuration normally associated with more traditional (even vintage-oriented) designs. However, it turns out that the baby jumbo is a really interesting body shape, and one that offers quite a bit of versatility and bags upon bags of character.

I decided to start off with a bit of fingerstyle – I often do this when reviewing anyway as I believe it offers an immediate impression of how the guitar responds under different kinds of dynamics – and what I heard was a wonderfully balanced sound that projected very strongly with the mids but also added a good hit of bass and a bit more snap than I expected. The tone isn't as chimey as a spruce-topped guitar, of course, but mahogany guitars can often be accused of being a little one-dimensional – in many ways that's exactly the appeal – and the Neptune's body shape just adds

With the great electronics on board, this is an excellent gigging guitar

The Faith has a wonderfully balanced sound with sublime projection

a different character that I wasn't quite expecting. As with many all-mahogany guitars, the key characteristic is that real mid-range punch and warmth that makes single-note runs sound very thick and defined. It's wonderful for a bit of slide, but that baby jumbo body adds just a little bit extra to the frequencies to keep things fresh. Projection and definition is excellent, as you would probably expect from a guitar designed by PJE.

Flatpicking yields a similar response, but I found that the low-end in particular truly benefited from this approach, producing a very even, balanced tone with a great, crisp clarity across the strings. All-mahogany guitars can sometimes find themselves a touch muddy but I couldn't coax it out of the Neptune no matter how hard I tried, so top marks there.

Plugging in to a PA or amplifier opens up the possibilities ever further, introducing the Neptune as a very solid gigging guitar indeed. Some of the acoustic uniqueness of the body shape is lost in translation, but that's a common trait of undersaddle pickups and shouldn't count as a flaw in this case. The resulting tone is still certainly a useful and versatile one that suits a variety of applications and doesn't suffer too badly from the dreaded "quack". The phase switch comes in particularly handy if your setup suffers from a bit of feedback, keeping things nice and quiet so you can get on with your performance free from distractions. It might not be the most advanced system you'll find at this price, but it's as solid and dependable as you like and full of good quality tone.

CONCLUSION

The all-mahogany Neptune really is a very addictive instrument. Soulful, dynamic and punchy; this guitar just begs to be played and the baby jumbo format genuinely offers something that little bit different to the norm. Of course, if you're looking for "the norm" then you might be better served elsewhere, but Faith has again got you covered, as there is also a dreadnought available (albeit without the electronics). It seems to me that if you were to have any preconceptions about the kind of all-mahogany guitar you want to buy, then it would be possible to overlook the Neptune in favour of say, a Sigma or Martin. But to do so would be a shame – this guitar has plenty to offer and will no doubt surprise you. Coupled with a dependable electronics package and a gorgeous hardcase, it's a great deal and you really ought to get out there and give one a try.

Alun Lower

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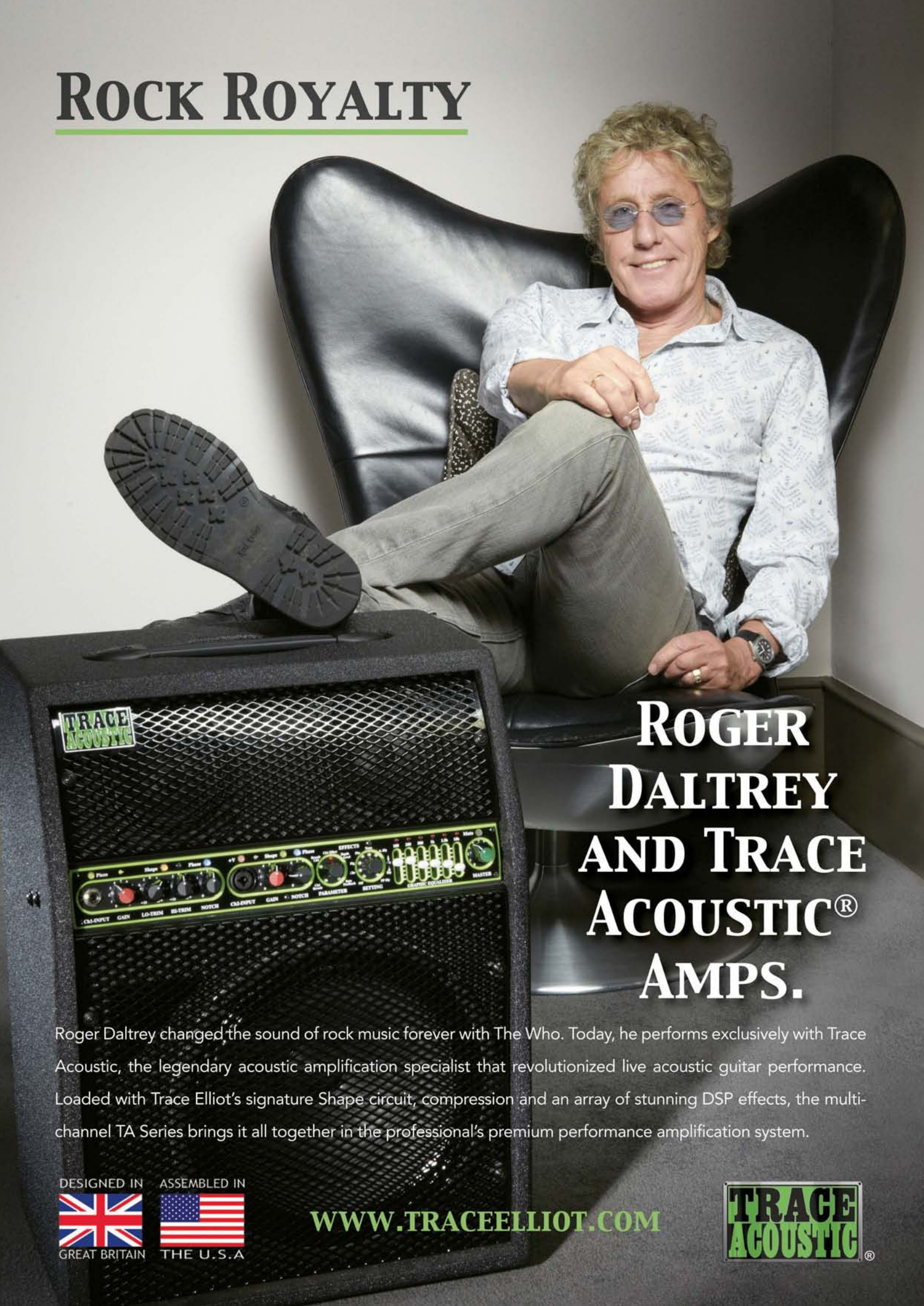

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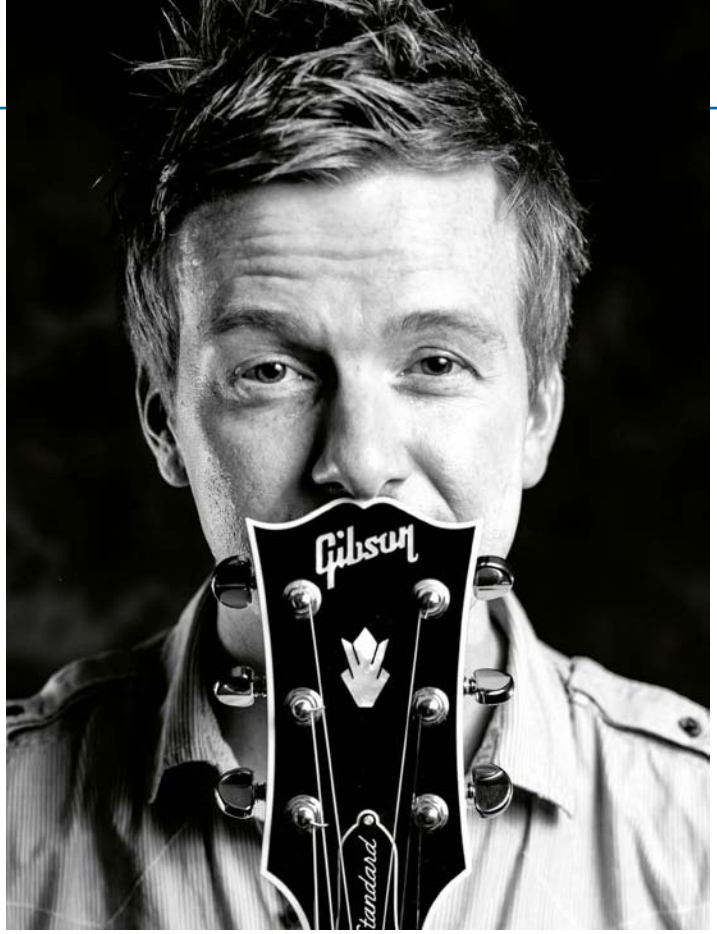
	TITLE	LABEL	GENRE
Jon Allen	Deep River	Monologue	Folk
Veronica Amarres / Sandro Volta	Crescentini & Giuliani – Songs For Soprano And Guitar	Brilliant Classics	Classical
Bellowhead	Revival	Universal	Folk Rock
Mike Cooper	Trout Steel	Paradise	Alt Folk
Miguel Angel Cortés	Bordón De Trapo	Karonte	Flamenco
Duo Pace Poli Cappelli	Castelnuovo Tedesco – Complete Music For Two Guitars	Brilliant Classics	Classical
Duo Trekel-Tröster	Dedications: New Music For Mandolin And Guitar	Thorofon	Classical
Duo Zigiotti Merlante	Raffaele Calace – Complete Opera For Mandolin And Guitar	Tactus	Classical
Richard Durrant	Cycling Music	Longman	Fingerstyle
Eva Fampas	Greek Guitar Music	Naxos	Greek
Ruthann Friedman	The Complete Constant Companion Sessions	Now Sounds	Folk
Gordon Giltrap	The Peacock Party	Esoteric	Fingerstyle
Robby Hecht	Robby Hecht	Old Man Henry	Folk
Phillip Henry & Hannah Martin	Live At Calstock	Dragonfly Roots	Folk
Eilen Jewell	Letters From Sinners & Strangers	Signature Sounds	Country
Kacey Jones	Amen For Old Friends	Igo	Country
The Lancashire Hotpots	Golden Crates (The Very Best Of)	Townsend Music	Comedy
McNeill & Heys	Any Other Morning	Transition	Folk
José Miguel Moreno / La Real Cámar	Luigi Boccherini – Guitar Quintets	Glossa	Classical
Sam Morrow	Ephemeral	Forty Below	Folk
Rab Noakes	Standing Up	Neon	Folk
Iarla O'Lionaird	Invisible Fields	Real World	Irish
David Olney	When The Deal Goes Down	Deadbeet	Folk
Beth Orton	Central Reservation	3 Loop Music	Folk
Pata Negra	Guitarras Callejeras	Nuevos Medios	Flamenco
Pavlo / Rik Emmett / Oscar Lopez	Trifecta	Hejaz Entertainment	Fingerstyle
Rodolfo Pérez	Fantasia Mexicana: Mexican Guitar Music	Brilliant Classics	Mexican
Cristiano Porqueddu	Novecento Guitar Sonatas	Brilliant Classics	Classical
Konrad Ragossnig / Walter Feybli	Spanish And South American Music For Two Guitars	Tuxedo	World
Kaela Rowan	Menagerie	Shoogle	Folk
Marco Salcito	Goldberg For Guitar	Dynamic	Classical
Seeger – Guthrie – Dylan	American Folk Legends	Not Now Music	Folk
Ed Sheeran	X	Atlantic	Folk Pop
Emily Smith	Ten Years	White Fall	Folk
Tomatito	Guitarra Gitana	Nuevos Medios	Flamenco
Townes Van Zandt	For The Sake Of The Song / Our Mother The Mountain	Charly	Country
Various Artists	American Heartland: Legends Of Country	Sony Music	Country
Various Artists	Classic African American Songsters	Smithsonian	Folk Blues
Various Artists	Island Style Ukulele 2	Neos Productions	Hawaiian
Various Artists	Strictly Flamenco	Not Now Music	Flamenco

THE NEXT BIG THING

JON HART



Jon Hart is one of the capital's latest talents; an astute musician who merges virtuoso fingerstyle guitar with catchy vocal harmony and beat boxing. Originally from the Isle of Wight, Jon self-manages his roles as a session musician and guitar tutor alongside his gig schedule. He has enjoyed tours to LA and Belgium in previous set-ups, receiving airplay on ABC radio, but is now focused on making his latest material – his debut EP *Defuse* has been hailed by critics as one of the most exciting and creative fingerstyle releases of late. Influenced by Newton Faulkner, Andy McKee, Jon Gomm, Imogen Heap, his follow-up EP *Sticks and Stones* in 2014 brings a together a tour for Jon. In September, Jon will play the London Acoustic Guitar Show on Saturday 13 September.

Now on your second EP, you've also been carving out a name for yourself on the live circuit in and around London...
That's right, I had four gigs the year I started, then 12 last year, and 34 so far this year, so it is taking off really well. I used to play as part of a band, but I decided to strike out on my own and it's working really well. I love performing; it's wonderful to be able to do that more now. I do covers of popular songs, or my own stuff, or a mix, together with some fingerstyle guitar and some beat boxing. I don't do a lot of it, but I tend to use it to get the audience's attention, and once they are listening, I can pay attention to the rest of the material I like to play.

What are some of your favourite songs to play?
I love doing 'Superstition'; I add all the instrumental bits on with a vocal harmony and a loop pedal, and some beats to back it. I find I like to put a bit of a personal stamp on quite a few of the covers I play, not all of them, but I do spice them up a little with a few individual touches by maybe putting a different harmony on with a harmony pedal, or putting some loops or beats in. I don't stray too far from the original, but I think it's good to present some originality if you are doing well-known songs. I am very fond of Sting's work, as a singer and as a songwriter, so I enjoy playing his songs. There is scope for spicing those songs up a bit.

You also teach guitar?
I do. I teach at the Sutton Music Centre, but all of my lesson time is booked up now because I am busy doing shows and recording – there is only so much time, so I have had to scale back some of my teaching to fit everything in. I do enjoy teaching, but I have had to assess what is going to progress my career the best, and right now, my bookings are really starting to develop, so I am putting a lot of effort into those. I am also working towards making an album which is really where my big passion lies; recording and releasing my own music is something I have wanted to do for as along as I have been writing and playing.

What about session work?
I am working with a producer, and I do sessions of four hours here and there when time permits. The thing with sessions is, you can record something that doesn't surface for about a year, but the projects are on going, so I do keep up with them as well. I do like doing sessions but, like everything else, it's a matter of trying to fit everything in – there just aren't enough hours in a day. Someone told me that the big advantage of being self-employed is that you get to pick and choose which 17 hours a day you are going to work! My own music is definitely my passion. I am working on getting my album out early next year; I have just finished getting 12 songs ready for it. I got the last track sorted out yesterday, and finished today, I was just having a quick jam, and a song appeared, so I am working that up, and that is all the songs ready to go. I tend to write when I have time to just jam around, and just seeing what comes along.

What got you started on guitar?
I started on piano when I was about five, and then I had

some cello lesions, and I got a guitar for Christmas – a three-quarter-size body – and I just fell in love with it. The guitar had everything I wanted, and I was learning to sing as well buy then, and when I was about 12 I started to write my own songs. I was nicknamed Johnny Gee-tar at school because my guitar went everywhere with me – I was never without it. It was like my right arm! I think once I discovered the guitar, I never really wanted to do anything else, and I know I am very lucky to be able to do what I love for a living

What guitar do you play now?
I have a Martin DC-1E that is my workhorse guitar, I do all my gigs with that one, and I write with it. For my 30th birthday, which was seven months ago, I got a Gibson J200 which I also use for some select gigs.

Being an independent musician means you're running your own business as well as playing and writing...
It does, but it's part of a solo musician's life these days. I think most solo musicians are running their own businesses as well as writing and playing. I have a manager who is great, he does all the networking side of things, and he has taken a load of work off me. It really is a matter of finding the time to get everything sorted out; it's difficult, but somehow it does all get done.

Does your workload mean that time to compose new material is limited?
It is less than it was, plus we have a new baby daughter to look after as well, so my free time is not what it used to be. Now that I have got a set together for shows, the pressure is off to learn something every day, and now I find that an idea will just come. As I said, I have been finishing off a song today that just popped up from a quick jam session which is what I do when I have time. I like to try different tunings and just see what comes along, without forcing anything.

What about rehearsal time?
Well, it's has taken me a while to work up a set of songs that I can offer for concerts, and now that I have got them, the pressure is off as far as learning and rehearsing songs is concerned. I am so busy with everything else, that practice comes when I have a few minutes to get warmed up and play a bit!

What are you focussing on next in your career?
I'm looking to get my album out in January 2015; I have some other guys who are going to work on it with me and that is very exciting. I just hope that my shows continue to grow. I am playing at the London Acoustic Guitar Show in September, and I am really excited about that – I can't wait, in fact. Jon Gomm is playing there and I am a huge fan of his. I am looking forward to seeing him play, and checking out the great names they have lined up. That was my ambition for 2014, and I've managed to achieve it while we're still in August.

www.jonhartmusic.com
Andy Hughes

LOWDEN GUITARS AT 40

The new-for-2014 Wee Lowden will be on display at the London Acoustic Guitar Show 2014 on stand A1

As the Northern Irish guitar builder celebrates 40 years making some of the most sought after acoustics, we chat to George Lowden about what he's learned after four decades in the business, and what we can expect from him next...

It's no secret; Lowden guitars are regarded by (somewhat wealthy) amateurs and professionals alike as some of the best guitars around – and, as of 2014, they've been around for 40 years. Their enduring reputation means you'll see Lowdens in the hands of some of the most notable musicians on the planet that span those four decades – Eric Clapton, Richard Thompson, Pierre Bensusan, Eric Roche, Foy Vance, Jon Gomm, Thomas Leeb... You get the picture.

George Lowden was born in 1951, in Belfast, Northern Ireland; at the age of 18, he had the same dream as many other teenagers – to be the next Jimi Hendrix or Eric Clapton. However, in 1973, armed with a booklet on guitar making by luthier John Bailey, he began to make acoustic guitars.

'I learned everything the hard way. I had no one to teach me how to avoid the obvious pitfalls. I tried new shapes, bracing designs and many other ideas and gradually emerged from the "hard school" of self-taught guitar making,' George reflects.

Between 1976 and 1979, George built the first guitars with the A-frame and dolphin voicing profiles, which would later establish the unique sound of the Lowden guitar we know and love today.

For a time, Lowden guitars were built in Japan, handmade by specialist craftsmen; George then established a factory in Ireland, then one in France, and he's now back in Ireland overseeing the production of his guitars in a small family-run business set-up.

Ahead of his appearance and masterclass with Jon Gomm at the London Acoustic Guitar Show, we caught up with George to discuss what's he's learned from the industry in 40 years, and about some new models you're likely to see on the Lowden stand over the London Acoustic Guitar Show weekend...

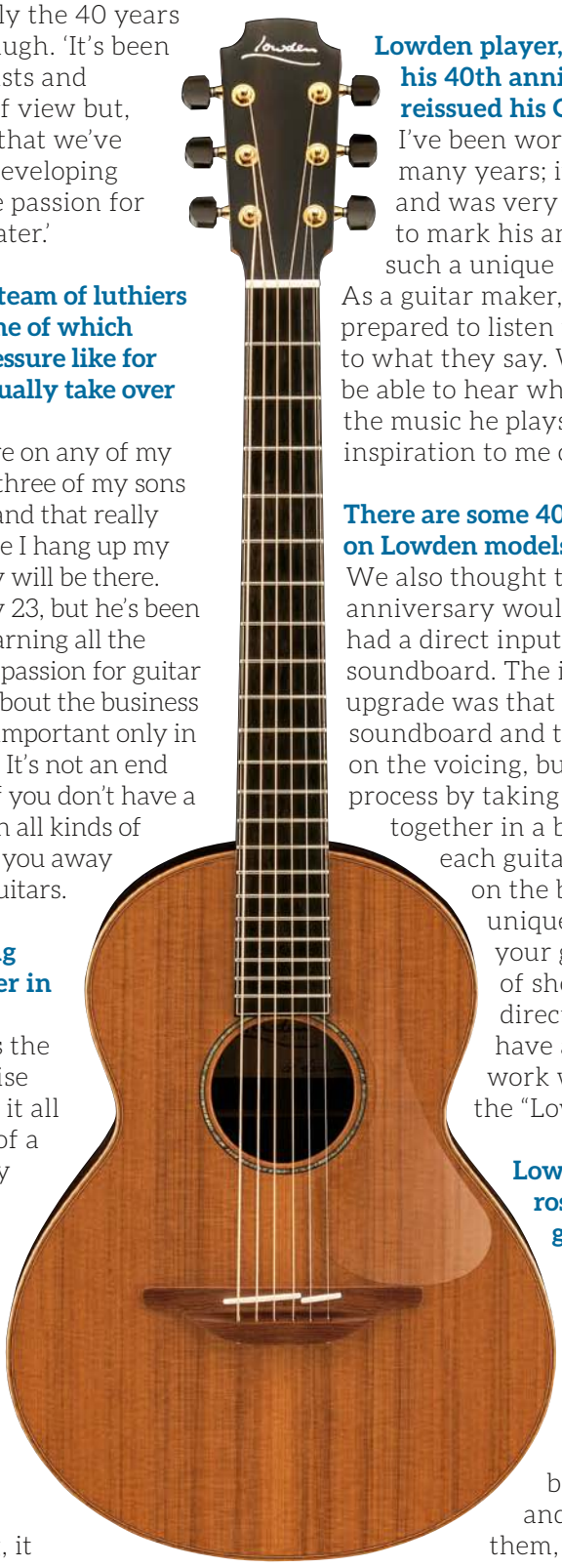
'What astounds me is how quickly the 40 years have gone,' George starts, with a laugh. 'It's been a real journey with all kinds of twists and turns from the commercial point of view but, for me, the most important fact is that we've been able to keep going and keep developing the designs and still have the same passion for it, or maybe even more, 40 years later.'

Lowden guitars are handbuilt by a team of luthiers handpicked by George Lowden, some of which include his children. What's the pressure like for the next generation that will eventually take over Lowden Guitars?

I'm very conscious not to put pressure on any of my children, but I feel very blessed that three of my sons are currently involved the business and that really does give me a lot of confidence. Once I hang up my boots – if I ever do – I know that they will be there. Aaron [Lowden], in particular, is only 23, but he's been working with me since he was 17, learning all the aspects of guitar making. He has the passion for guitar making itself, but he's also learning about the business as well, which I also regard as being important only in that it facilitates good guitar making. It's not an end in itself, but it is important because if you don't have a good business model you end up with all kinds of other pressures on you that can lead you away from making and developing great guitars.

What have been the main learning curves throughout a 40-year career in the guitar making industry?

I think probably two things. One is the more you learn, the more you realise you still have to learn. That makes it all very exciting. It sounds a little bit of a cliché, but no one can say that they have "cracked it", and I hope that Lowden guitars are improving all the time, but to what extent they are is really a reflection of that fact. Secondly, what I've realised is that there is an optimum size for a company wanting to make great acoustic guitars. We've got around 20 people working for us and the optimum size for a company like ours probably isn't too far from that. Once you get big, it becomes very difficult to continue to develop from the design and quality point of view. There are so many dangers once you get over 40 or 50 employees, which make it difficult from a training point of view, and from a quality control point of view. Despite many opportunities to grow because the demand for the guitars is there, I prefer to keep the company small and keep the growth slow and sustainable. Whatever size we end up being in the future, we want to grow at a rate that doesn't compromise quality and the key areas of development.



Lowden player, Pierre Bensusan, also celebrates his 40th anniversary this year. As such, you've reissued his Old Lady Lowden...

I've been working with Pierre closely for so many years; it just was the right thing to do and was very fitting. We thought it'd be good to mark his anniversary in some way, too. He's such a unique and world-class guitar player. As a guitar maker, you can't develop unless you're prepared to listen to your players – to really listen to what they say. What a privilege it is for me to be able to hear what Pierre has to say and listen to the music he plays. He's been a constant source of inspiration to me over the years.

There are some 40th anniversary upgrade options on Lowden models available throughout this year...

We also thought that another good way to mark the anniversary would be if I personally worked on and had a direct input with the voicings of the guitar's soundboard. The idea behind the 40th anniversary upgrade was that you know that I have chosen the soundboard and the bracing material and worked on the voicing, but also to document the whole process by taking photographs and putting it all together in a book which is totally unique for each guitar – you can see your soundboard on the bench being worked on. It's a unique way of documenting the way your guitar was made and a good way of showing not just that I have had a direct input in the guitar, but that I also have an excellent team of luthiers who work with me and work according to the "Lowden tradition."

Lowden Guitars has a notable artist roster that includes some of the greatest guitar players in the world; what are the parameters for becoming a Lowden endorsee?

It's never a player asking for an endorsement. It tends to happen when a player has just been in contact with us generally, letting us know that they've been playing one of our guitars and so on. We'll then get to know them, their playing style, and then we'll

The Lowden team at their HQ in Northern Ireland

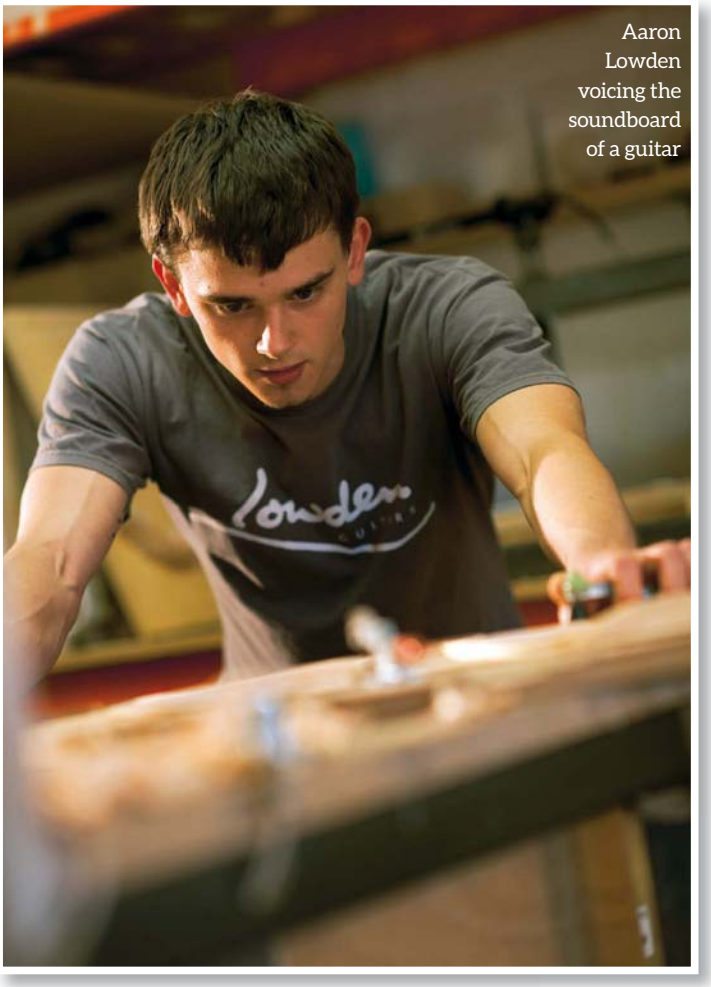
perhaps feel that it could be a good marriage, if you like. It happened recently with a player from Hawaii called Stephen Inglis. He's an amazing slack key guitar player. I don't suppose there's one definite way in which one can become an endorsee. The idea of endorsees is quite loaded I think, because some of the bigger companies work really hard with artist relations, and it's almost like a beauty contest where some of the companies are fighting each other to get certain people who are going to become famous "on the books". We prefer not to work that way, and work closely with artists who already love our guitars – it's not a commercial aspect.

Also new for 2014 is Lowden's smallest body shape, aptly named the "Wee Lowden" which people will be able to see and try at the London Acoustic Guitar Show

Actually, the reason I made the first Wee Lowden was down to Gary Lightbody of Snow Patrol. He called me and asked me if I'd make small-bodied guitar. I thought: "Well, okay, maybe I've got to design a new guitar here." So I started working on it, and it took about a year to get it to the point where we had a prototype on the table. When I contacted Gary and told him it was finally ready he was over the moon. What's been interesting about the Wee Lowden is that a lot of players who already play Lowden, pick up this one up and say that they really want one of these small-bodied guitars. The voicing was difficult to get right because the soundbox is so small, but it has worked out pretty well.

What's a day in the life of George Lowden like now, compared to when you first started 40 years ago?

Well, firstly, there's no normal day! [Laughs]. If I'm in the workshop, a day would consist of a walk around the workshop having a look at all of the guitar parts being made, just checking things, and maybe noticing small things that would need adjustment; then it'd be a quick chat with the guitar makers there, one-by-one, just talking about what they're doing. It'd then be back to the office to deal with business-type issues that have to be looked at. If I'm lucky, I'll get a chance to go to my own bench to get on with my own guitars because I still try to make some personally built guitars, and it's important for me to keeping doing that – I don't want to



Aaron Lowden voicing the soundboard of a guitar

The Lowden Team congratulate George Lowden
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stop! I do a lot of traveling looking for woods, which takes up a lot of my time. Although that aspect is hugely time consuming, it's also very important.

If we were to peer into your dry room, what tonewood delights would we find in there right now?
You'd find bundles of Hawaiian Koa, Indian rosewood, Honduras rosewood, Claro walnut, maybe a few sets of Brazilian rosewood, lots of California redwood, British Columbian Sitka, then Swiss or Alpine spruce, and Adirondack spruce. There are, of course, stacks and stacks of ebony and mahogany. The list is endless! All of the wood has to be what we called "sticked". This is to do with how we store the wood – we place sticks in between each piece so that the air is able to freely move throughout the bundles of wood and help with the seasoning process.

Having worked so hard to get the Lowden brand to where it is in 2014, if you were to start building guitars now as opposed to 40 years ago, how do you think it would compare given the state of the economy and the way people engage and buy guitars nowadays?
Well, I didn't set out to get where I've gotten; I didn't have a plan as such. All I wanted to do was make the absolute best guitars that I could at the time. That's always been that way since day one. If you told me back then that we'd end up where we are now, I'd have been very shocked. If I was starting now, I guess I'd do it the same way – without a plan. It would be easier to learn the basics in this age because of the internet, but it would be hard to come up with something unique because there are so many people out there making guitars; back then there weren't that many.

Lowden Guitars will be exhibiting at this year's London Acoustic Guitar Show and they're bringing two of their friends along: Jon Gomm and his six-string sidekick, Wilma, his "well-used" Lowden. So, what can we expect from the Geroge Lowden and Jon Gomm masterclass?
Gosh, if only I knew that! Jon is a bit like me; we don't like to plan too much and that way what you get will hopefully be more interesting and entertaining.

'I like it when a guitar has been used, even used to a level which means it may be a little "damaged"', George says of Jon's Lowden, Wilma. [Check out Jon's interview of page 24 to see it for yourself.] 'The truth is that if a guitar has been made correctly from the beginning, even if the player wears a new soundhole in it, time has shown that the guitar doesn't seem to suffer too much from that kind of playing. The more it's played, the better it gets if it's built right to start with – and Wilma is a perfect example of that,' George finishes.

Lowden Guitars exhibit at the London Acoustic Guitar Show 2014. See them on stand A1.
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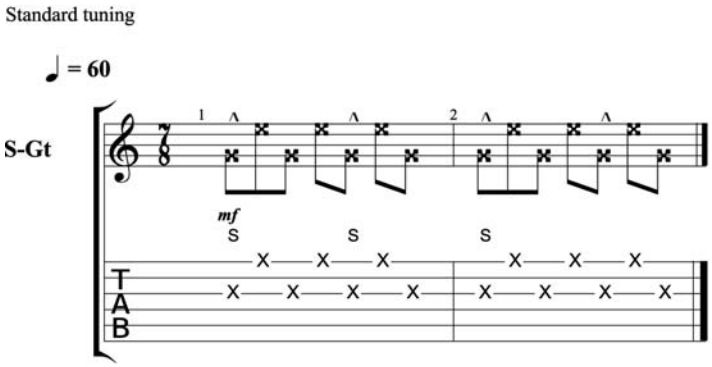
IN THE LOOP

STEPPING INTO SEPTUPLE WITH 7/8 TIMING

When it's just you, a loop pedal, and an acoustic guitar at a gig you need to use every trick possible to keep the interest of the audience. Recently I was lucky enough to play the London Acoustic Guitar night where there was a succession of excellent musicians playing unusual guitar styles, with interesting note choices, drop tunings, capos, percussive sounds, vocal loop harmony parts and a thousand other ideas. Players including Jon Hart, Chris Woods, Broca Ensemble, Amrit Sond and Justin Dowling played a variety of styles that make you realise that it's possible to keep a crowd interested with nothing more than an acoustic guitar, some pedals and your imagination.

So called "odd" timings such as 7/8 can be a really useful tool to keep people's attention. Odd timings are only really unusual because we don't hear them that much in the west, but in different cultures they are the norm. There is no reason why music should only be in 4/4 or 3/4, try something more interesting.

EXAMPLE 1



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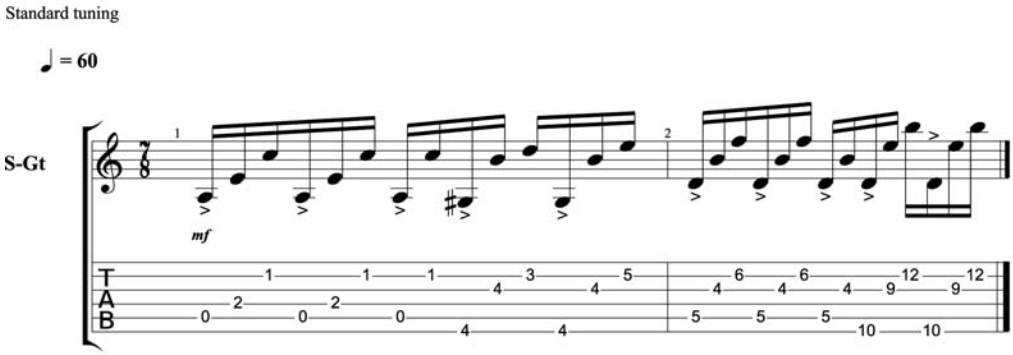
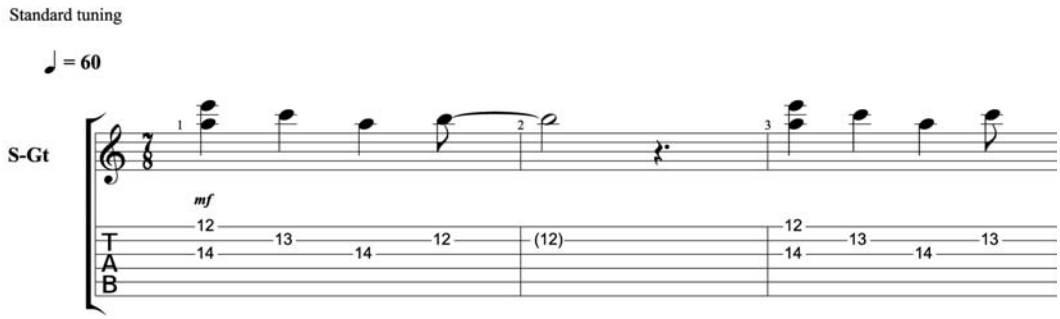


For example, in Indian music 7/8 and 5/8 are common time signatures. To hear a combination of Indian and western traditions try the band Shakti which features the renowned jazz guitar player John McLaughlin playing alongside Zakir Hussain, one of the truly great Indian percussionists.

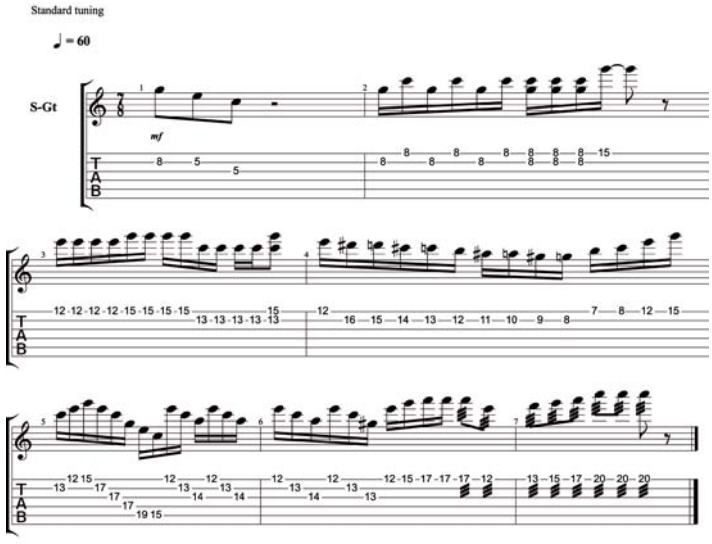
In this column, we're going to look at 7/8 time. Septuple time is a wonderful time signature to experiment with as it sounds only slightly off; it's 6/8 with an extra beat or 8/8 minus a beat. Once you play in 7/8 for a while it won't even feel that odd. Odd timings don't have to mean muso noodling, artists as diverse as Radiohead, The National, The Beatles and Slint have played songs in 7/8 time. Remember the heavy section of 'Paranoid Android' by Radiohead? That's in 7/8. You can count it ***1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7*** or ***1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4*** or ***1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2*** or ***1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3*** depending where you accent the rhythm, where the strongest beats are. Practice is the key here when getting the feel of unusual rhythms – keep trying and it'll soon feel comfortable.

Another useful way of keeping the audience interested is to use the guitar as a drum. Hitting the body of the guitar to play beats is something flamenco guitarists have been doing for years, but it's very hard to do as well as playing chords and riffs. Players like Jon Gomm and Andy McKee do this very well – playing phenomenal percussive guitar parts on the body of the guitar and chords and melodies at the same time. It's a lot easier if you can use a loop pedal to record the rhythmic loop in first then play the chords over the top. This is how a lot of singer-songwriters build arrangements with dance style beats. For example, Ed Sheeran does it like this. Another idea is to use a loop pedal to record a beat box loop; experiment with a few different ways of creating percussion. If you have a mic connected to your looper, you can use any found sound to create a loop anything from hitting a chair to a random noise from the audience.

EXAMPLE 3



EXAMPLE 4



MATT STEVENS

Instrumental Composer

Matt Stevens is a musician and composer from London. An instrumental artist, he uses an acoustic guitar and sampler to create multi-layered tracks live. His music has been described as "a guitar orchestra". He plays live all over the UK and listens to Sonic Youth, Carcass, Nick Drake, Cardiacs and King Crimson. He is constantly recording new music for several projects. ***www.mattstevensguitar.com***

I remember a gig where an alarm was going off and I created a loop and played along with it. Sometimes random events can create those unusual things that make gigs special – go with it.

In this month's In The Loop we'll combine an unusual timing with hitting the body of the guitar to create a rhythm. We'll record a beat into our looper pedal in an odd timing, loop it round and then play a chord sequence over the top. This month's piece is based on a song from my first album *Echo* called 'Jubilee' which is in 7/8. It's accented with the strong beats on 1 and the 5, so it's ***1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3***.

Example 1 is the percussive loop, showing the accents. Experiment with hitting the guitar in different places as this gives you different sounds; hitting some parts of the guitar will sound more like a kick drum and others more like a snare or tom. Experiment – different guitars have different sounds. If you have an octave pedal you can record deeper sounds. Hit loop record on your pedal and record in ***example 1*** twice as you'll need it twice to fit in all the chords from ***example 2***.

Example 2 is our chord sequence in A minor. The chords are Am, E first inversion, D minor 6 (no 5th) and E7 no 5th (3rd inversion, 7th in the root). Play this over the loop that you recorded for ***example 1***. It's a fairly straightforward chord sequence with a few inversions. In rock music, many musicians will play a root chord rather than playing a 3rd or a 5th as the lowest note. Playing the 3rd of a triad as the lowest note is called a 1st inversion; if you play a 5th in the root it's a 2nd inversion. The second chord of the sequence is an E major chord with a 3rd in the root, so it's a 1st inversion. For the 4th chord of the sequence, the 7th of E (D) is the lowest note, so this is a 3rd inversion. A 3rd inversion is any other note apart from the triad of the chord as the lowest note.

Next, we'll add our melody based on an arpeggio of A minor, because there is quite an interesting chord sequence and rhythm we can get away with a fairly simple melody. Play ***example 3***, but don't record it. In this arrangement we'll play the melody then play a solo like the one in ***example 4*** and then go back to the melody in ***example 3*** again.

Ok, so now we have a melody, let's try playing some lead parts over these chords. ***Example 4*** is based on C major and A minor arpeggios. C is the relative major of A minor and I've also added some chromatic passing notes. Over this progression, the main triads I'd choose to play in addition would be: Bm7b5, Dmin7, E7, and Fmaj7. I'd use these and add chromatic notes to taste. When playing solos remember the importance of phrasing and leaving space. Listen to Miles Davis or John Coltrane and notice that while they play very fast parts, they also leave space to give them context. Music is a conversation and you need to think of it as a way of communicating rather than showing off your playing.

As you can see by taking a few simple ideas such as an unusual time signature, inversions, a percussive guitar part, and a few interesting chromatic note choices, we can create memorable guitar parts. Keep experimenting with these ideas and find your own style. Listening to lots of different types of music and keeping an open mind will provide inspiration.

Matt Stevens

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12 STRING CORNER

'Muddy Water Blues' with Paul

Since my signature 12-string guitars came out with JHS, it never occurred to me that I would put my Stella 12-strings away in preference for the Vintage models, but that's exactly what has happened. The more I experiment with the Vintage, the more I love it. It changes moods and genres with ease and plays all the way up the neck without losing power and tone – and the intonation is perfect. The proof of the instrument's usability is in the fact that the actual designer uses it as their main instrument! When the original sample came over, it had a Fishman onboard system that was cut into the shoulder. That's the only thing I changed as it didn't suit the guitar and I hate the fact that if a player wanted to change the pickup, they would either have to leave the old one where it was or take it out, thus leaving a hole in the shoulder. I opted, instead, to install a Fishman Matrix System that is non-obtrusive and gave a truer 12-string acoustic sound when amplified, plus the fact it can be taken out without damaging the body!

The other thing that is not on the guitar is a tuner. Why? I find it impossible to tune a 12-string via this method. To really get the best from a 12-string you have to slightly tune the octave/unison strings out with each other, only minutely; and that takes quite a bit of practice by ear and an onboard tuner is not suitable for the job, in my opinion. In the 60s, Harmony put out a leaflet with their 12-strings advising players to tune down a tone or a tone and a half in order to get the best sound out of the instrument. I use my 12-strings across many different styles and for many different things. In open tunings I can fly orchestral style tunes or back vocals with the fullest of sounds. In the blues genre I can play strong bass lines with chordal picking that drives songs to their fullest for a solo performer. I also get a kick out of writing tunes and songs – especially reflecting on current, or recent experiences. The song we've got this month is 'Muddy Water Blues' which I love to play, and hope you will too.

Paul Brett

'MUDDY WATER' PAUL BRETT

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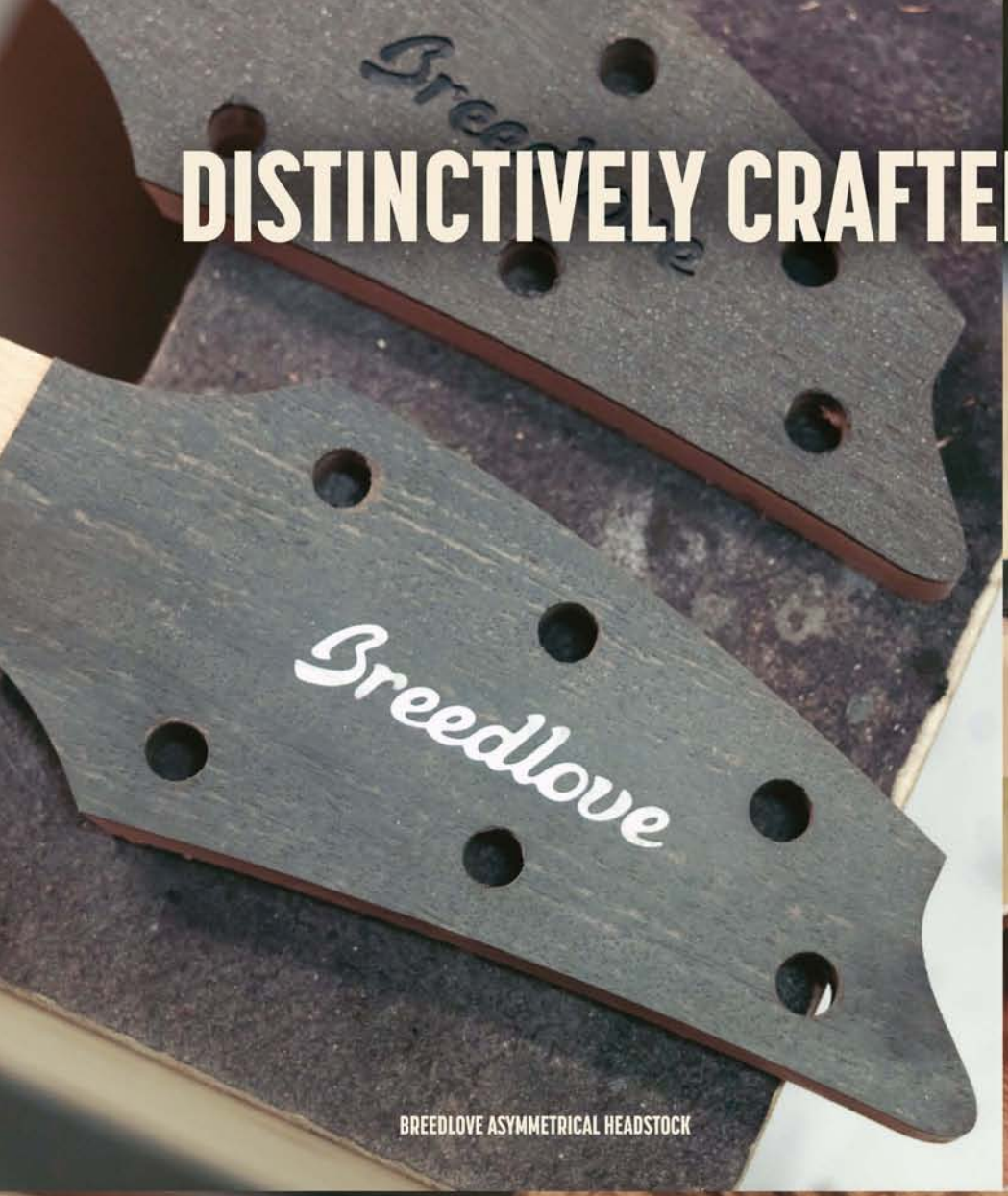

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NEW MUSIC

MARK NEVIN

BEAUTIFUL GUITARS

www.marknevin.com

This fourth solo outing sees the songwriting force behind Fairground Attraction (and latterly Morrissey and Kirsty MacColl) mixing a fine batch of new songs with a handful of old favourites to produce an 11-track blend typically rich in lyrical and melodic invention. Celebrated voices have interpreted his work over the years (Eddi Reader, Brian Kennedy, David Bowie et al) yet Nevin's half-spoken, Ronnie Lane-meets-Dylan delivery brings an added depth to the older stuff (a swaggering, Kick Horns-fuelled take on 'Perfect' and the ever-lovely 'Kiteflyer's Hill') as well as an engaging warmth to new gems, from the lilting title track (Tim Edey and BJ Cole in dazzling form) to the glorious, Hammond and brass sweep of '100 Years of Heartbreak' and the classic-in-waiting, 'Love=Love=Love'.

STEVE BENNETT

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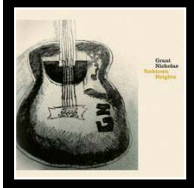

A first solo outing for the Feeder frontman, revealing an intriguing and hitherto under-explored, Genesis/Barclay James Harvest side that manifests itself from the off via psychedelic-pastoral opener 'Soul Mates' all the way through to the stripped down, acoustic closer 'Safe In Place'. There are touches of the 'Wildwood' Weller along the way, ('Hitori') and 'Tall Trees' floats on a stately ELO/Beatles current before dipping into prog-grandeur, Transatlantic waters. Things go all Simple Minds on 'Vampires' and there's a nod to the festival crowd in the air-punching, 'Time Stood Still' but the elegantly strummed, Lennon-esque 'Broken Resolutions' and the Doves/Elbow-echoing, 'Silent In Space' reveal the classic, pop-rock sensibility and songcraft of an artist who knows not only what works but how best to deliver it.

STEVE BENNETT

BILLY THE KID

HORSESHOES & HAND GRENADES

www.billythekidonline.com

Produced by Frank Turner, who also duets on standout ballad, 'This Sure As Hell Ain't My Life', this fourth album sees the Canadian pop-rocker mining a very 80s Heart/Bangles seam (opener 'Phone Bills', in particular) on a strong collection of songs that suffers only from a tendency to lean too heavily, too often, on the overdrive pedal. Highlights include the chugging, Steve Earle-ish 'Riverbank', and the crowd-pleasing, country-rocker 'Science' with the acoustic, 'Chelsea Rose' bringing a welcome, reflective change of pace. Pitched somewhere between Cyndi Lauper and Lucinda Williams's sparky kid sister, Billy saves the best for last in the finger-picked, 'Mr. Tambourine Man' echoes of 'Thoroughfare', the similarly Dylan-esque, 'Walkin' Around Hotel Blues' and wistful closer 'Young + On Fire'.

STEVE BENNETT

DON ROSS

PS15

www.donrossonline.com

A release in which the Canadian fingerstylist reworks his own *Passion Session* album 15 years after its initial outing. Though production and playing seem punchier than previously, it's nevertheless an ultra-melodic, jazz-pop outing pitched firmly in Lee Ritenour/Earl Klugh territory. Ross is the only guitarist to win the US National Fingerstyle Championship twice (the merits of music-as-competition, notwithstanding) and this feels like an album for players; beautifully rendered, plenty to admire but maybe a little too polished to love. Standout, 'Berkley Springs' has a gentle, jazz-lullaby quality and at times, you'd swear there were two people playing, particularly on the bubbling harmonics and light, percussive bounce of 'Annie and Martin'. And while 'Blue Bear' brings a welcome sense of fun, there's much meandering elsewhere.

STEVE BENNETT

JAMES YORKSTON

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www.jamesyorkston.co.uk

Three cheers for an artist keeping the fragile, off-kilter, Incredible String Band flame alive. From the drowsy, rambling opener, 'Fellow Man', via 'The Blues You Sang' and the wonderfully mad, spoken narrative of 'Guy Fawkes' Signature' (with it echoes King Creosote's 'Diamond Mind' tales) Yorkston, featured-guest KT Tunstall and producer Alexis Taylor (Hot Chip) conjure that elusive blend of the (seemingly) totally original and comfortingly familiar that's quiet, quirky and richer with every listen. Softly picked acoustics and shimmering, string and keyboard washes underscore 'Broken Waves' (a heartbreaking tribute to late friend and band-member, Doogie Paul), the dreamlike, ghost-ceilidh of 'Red Fox' and warm, breathy embrace of 'Honey On Thigh' while 'Great Ghosts' stirs proceedings into a gentle, folk jog. An intimate, psych-folk gem.

STEVE BENNETT

LARKIN POE

KIN

www.larkinpoe.com

The multi-instrumentalist Lovell Sisters (fine singers, consummate players both) continue their explorations way beyond the folk-bluegrass of earlier offerings on what, despite the wealth of LP material already out there, constitutes their official full-length debut. Full-on, rocking opener 'Jailbreak' sets a crunchy, electric prog-soul tone that's immediately picked up by the strutting, glam-rock 'Don't' with its Glitter Band clap and thwack rhythm. The key's in the strength of songwriting, whether it's GoGos-style, top-down, FM-radio fare or Kate Bush-meets-Grace Slick inventiveness and highlights abound, from the in-yer-face 'Elephant' and appropriately-galloping, Fleetwood Mac-ish, 'High Horse', to the finger-snappin' girl-pop of 'Jesse', the pulsating raunch n'roll of 'Sugar High' or the delicately bitter-sweet (and lyrically very clever) closing piano ballad, 'Overachiever'.

STEVE BENNETT

JERRY DOUGLAS

THREE BELLS

www.jerrydouglas.com

Douglas reassembles his band of fellow Dobro-meisters, Rob Ickes and Mike Auldridge (in a final project before cancer brought about his untimely death) for their first recordings since 1994's Grammy-winning, Great Dobro Sessions. All three boast roots/Americana CVs like phonebooks and it's clear from the off, with old-timey opener, 'Silver Threads Among The Gold' weaving its delicate, filigree back-porch patterns we're in effortlessly laid-back, virtuoso company, be it on the beautiful, Douglas solo, Hawaiian-jazz reading of The Beatles ''Til There Was You' that glides almost unnoticed into 'Moon River' or headlong, runaway train 'North'. With the whole book-ended by gentle gospel reverie, there's variety from the pure Celtic strains of 'The Perils of Private Mulvaney' and more Hawaii in gleeful cheese-fest, 'Sunrise Serenade'.

STEVE BENNETT

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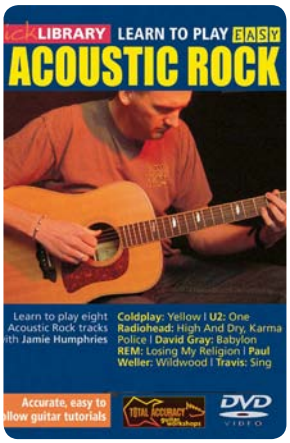
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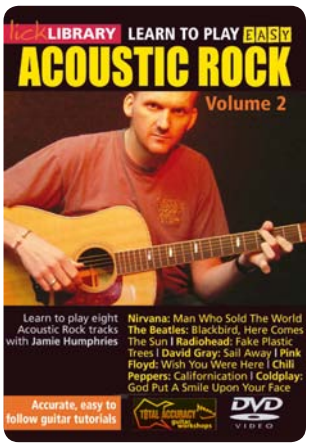
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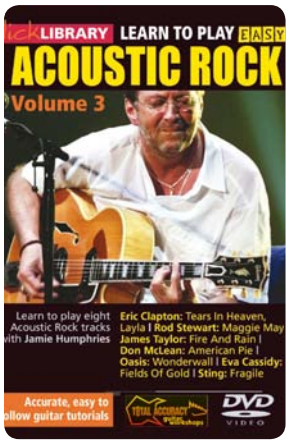
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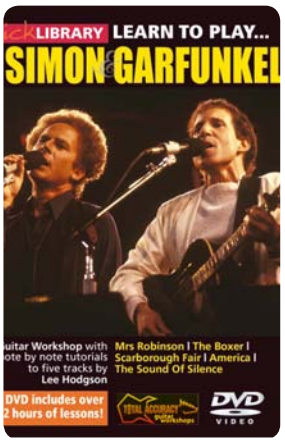
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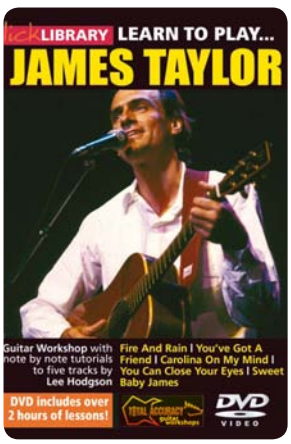
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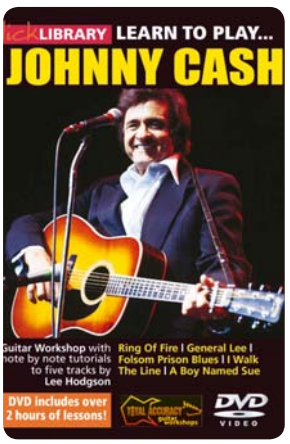
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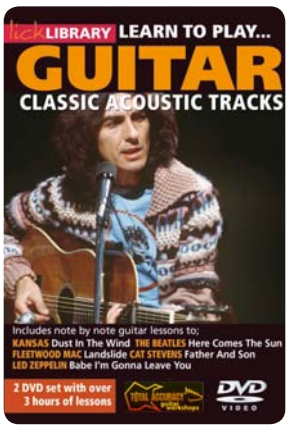
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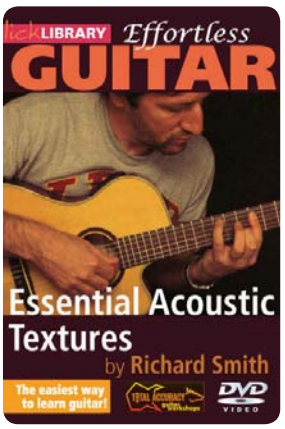

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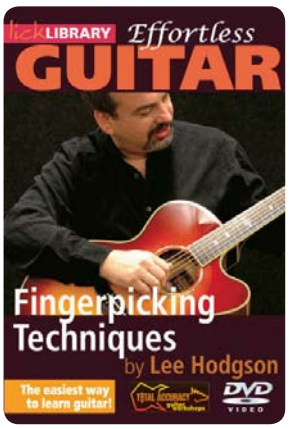

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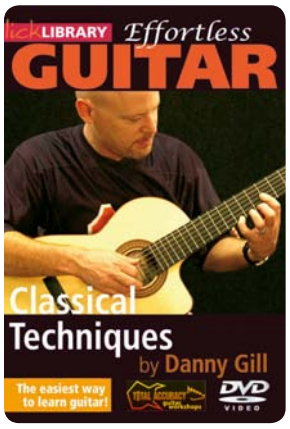

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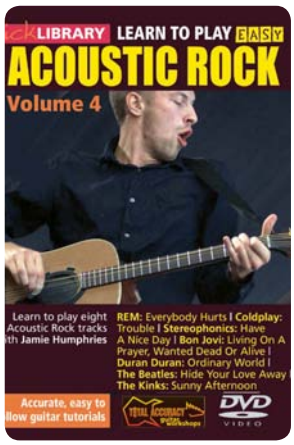
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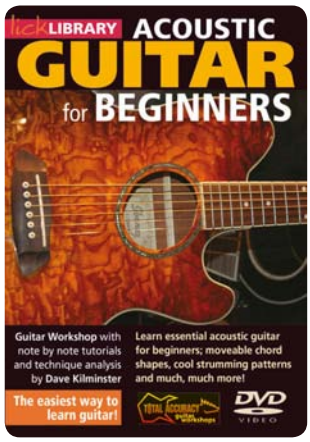
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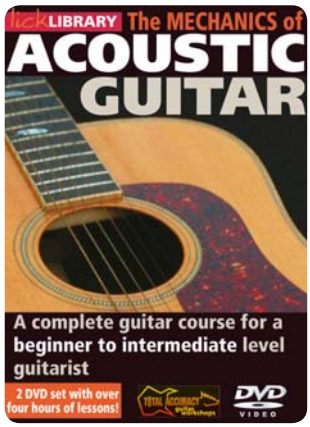
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CLIVE CARROLL
Acoustic Virtuoso

Essex boy Carroll was born into a family of musicians and 35 years on he finally got a job writing for Acoustic magazine. In between, he spent a lot of time waiting around in airports, filing his nails & befriending theatre sound technicians.
www.clivecarroll.co.uk

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE

BLACK MOON

DADGAD MUSINGS WITH CLIVE

'BLACK MOON' CLIVE CARROLL

If you are interested in the unique characteristics that DADGAD tuning has to offer and you are still finding your way around the chord shapes and scales, then this piece might be quite useful. 'Black Moon' is a slow air influenced by the Irish tradition and features some ornamentation, too.

It is usually paired up with a slow march called 'Westward Move' also by myself, which will be another *Acoustic* article.

A version of 'Black Moon' is currently available to watch via my website and the digital edition of this magazine. It differs slightly from the printed version here as it changes from performance to performance but the beginning is the same!

The anacrusis D is plucked with the thumb and immediately after, the third string G is sounded again by the thumb, followed by a hammer-on to A. Make sure the A is the strongest sounding of these three notes. At beat three,

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another G is played followed by a quick hammer-on to Ab, pull-off to G, then F on string four. Remember that the Ab and G link with the F, i.e. there is no need to rush after the first G.

Bar two begins with a D5 chord on the lower three strings and these notes conclude phrase one. The three strings are strummed slowly with the thumb but remember that the melody falls on string four and this should be the loudest note of the chord. Phrase two begins with a run leading up to the chord of Bb/add2 at the start of bar three. The D hammers on to the E with finger two, then the third finger is used for the F. Hold this note and once the C on string two is sounded with finger four, add the bass Bb to complete the full chord.

We're currently halfway through the phrase so pluck the melody note C on string two, the open first string D, then the chord of F. I use fingers one and two for this chord but two and three are fine. Towards the end of bar three you will notice an Ab on string three. In isolation, this sounds a little dissonant but its purpose is to serve as an embellishment on the note G (hammer on and pull off quickly). Phrase two concludes with the C chord at the start of bar four. The bass D immediately after is played quietly with the thumb. I hover around the 14th fret to create a tasto mood, which sounds rich when amplified.

Phrase three begins with the five semi-quaver notes at the end of bar four followed by the chord at the start of bar five. I hammer on the E to F of this chord with fingers three and four and after plucking the D on string one; finger two then hammers from the F to G with finger four. Finger two frets the E at the top of the Am7 chord half way through bar five. As before, make sure the upcoming ornamental notes belong to the D immediately after them. The Gm6 chord at the start of bar six is fretted with one and four, and finger two is then added to sound the second string C. Halfway through bar six, fret the Dm first inversion chord with fingers one and three. The following Ab notes are not dissimilar to those at bar three.

The short phrase four starts with the F chord in bar eight. I use fingers two, three and four; though one, two and three are actually more economical. More importantly, throughout this phrase it is really useful to turn the picking hand slightly so that the fingers pluck at about 90 degrees to the strings. This avoids the scraping sound, which would muddy the clarity of the music.

The zeros in brackets are optional. I sometimes play this effect by lightly brushing with the flesh of the index finger from strings one to three. I saw Julian Bream use it one time and I loved it. The second short, or sub phrase starts at bar 10. The F chord moves to a C first inversion, then back to F by bar 11. The material from the end of this bar to bar 14 is a variation on phrase three.

Bar 15 opens with a Dm first inversion and after the initial hammer on, pause before the upcoming ornament and then allow those to flow into the G, F, G, bass note A and hammer from D to E. Next, slide the second string C to D with finger four. The C is actually played at the same time as the first string open D. This is a very useful effect where one string has arrived at the required pitch but the other string is still catching up. This technique is used in fiddle music all over the world.

By now the following chord shapes will look familiar. From bar 16 you will notice that the bass line descends down the D minor scale and at the end of bar 17 there is a slow bend on the fifth string C before resolving to D5. I generally bend this C until it almost reaches the D and the length can depend on the speed the phrase is played, the venue, and reverb setting.

The score has been set in four time, but remember that it should be played freely where the phrases themselves are more important than a strict time signature.

Clive Carroll

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LEON HUNT
UK Banjo Expert

Leon Hunt continues to confound the stereotypes that try to confine the banjo to bluegrass, by making his living playing alongside some of the world's top musicians from a number of musical styles and disciplines. That said, he's not one to shy away from the clichés either – watch the TV for a long enough and there's every chance you'll hear some of his music. Leon has also enjoyed being part of several major theatre productions and as well as being a frequent contributor to *Acoustic*, Leon also recently completed his debut instructional package for Mel Bay, which is out now. ***www.leonhunt.com***

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

SQUIRREL HUNTERS

SOME OLD-TIME PLAYING WITH JOHN HARTFORD

Had it not been for a photo of John Hartford in the first banjo instruction book I ever bought, I might well have thrown in the towel before I'd even got started.

I bought my first banjo at the age of 17 on what was then, and still is, an unfathomable whim. My circle of friends at the time consisted mostly of bleary-eyed layabouts that clearly hadn't seen the inside of a barbershop for a while. Bluegrass music was geographically about 5,000 miles from where we were, but culturally it might as well have been the indigenous music of Jupiter. Unsurprisingly, my friends were united in the opinion that I'd completely lost my mind, and more importantly the £40 my new banjo had cost me.

It's one thing to be infatuated by the sound of the banjo, but tragically this 17-year-old version of myself was also totally convinced that the banjo was "very cool". There were some buskers playing regularly around town on banjos, fiddles and mandolins; they all seemed to be fairly rock n' roll so it must be cool, right? Wrong. If you think the banjo has a bad public image now, roll back 30 years, it was truly terrible.

Still blissfully wafting around in my delusional bubble, I picked up a copy of Peter Wernick's 1974 beginner's bible: *Bluegrass Banjo*, which is still a great book, by the way. That was very nearly the end of it all right there. There was page after page of photos of people wearing cowboy hats and plaid shirts. This wasn't the scene I thought I was buying into and no matter how much I loved the sound, to most teenagers, myself very much included, image will be the principal deciding factor. A glimmer of hope did eventually arrive by page 47 in the form of a photo of a certain beardy and distinctly hippy looking John Hartford; looking far more like a member of the Grateful Dead than one of The Beverly Hillbillies. This was what I was after. For the next few years I hung onto that image and conveniently ignored the rest.

It wasn't until several years later that I sat down and really started listening to Hartford's music. His approach, not just to the banjo, but to music in general, was as laid back as that photo had led me to believe. As much as I love bluegrass music, laid back isn't a description that is often levelled at it. Hartford's '70s songwriter sensibilities combined with his appreciation and deep understanding of traditional American music complimented each other perfectly.

In a genre of music where precision and technique is held in such high esteem, Hartford's banjo playing was refreshingly loose. Let me qualify this by first saying that I don't personally buy into the notion that if something is old, ethnic, badly played and hard on the ear it necessarily has "great feel" or even worse "authenticity" any more than I believe the opposite will automatically yield great music. Hartford proved, however, that it is possible to add character to music by adopting a less conformist view of the beat, and all without sacrificing any rhythmic drive or correctness. The earthy quality his playing always had was also in part down to the way he tuned his banjo. In the last column I talked about the various alternative banjo tunings players adopt. Hartford's approach was simplicity itself, he merely kept the standard G tuning (g, D, G, B, D) but wound it all down to E or even Eb, which gave his banjo a deep "plunky" sound. I'm assuming this was initially done more out of necessity, to accommodate his deep voice, but it also contributed hugely to his unique musical identity.

'Squirrel Hunters' is a traditional old-time American tune that in recent years has been plucked from total obscurity and thrust into relative obscurity, largely by the playing of John Hartford. While on the face of it, there's nothing particularly remarkable about this tune; it's definitely one that becomes greater than the sum of its parts when listened to, or better still, played. The favourite tunes from this tradition have an almost

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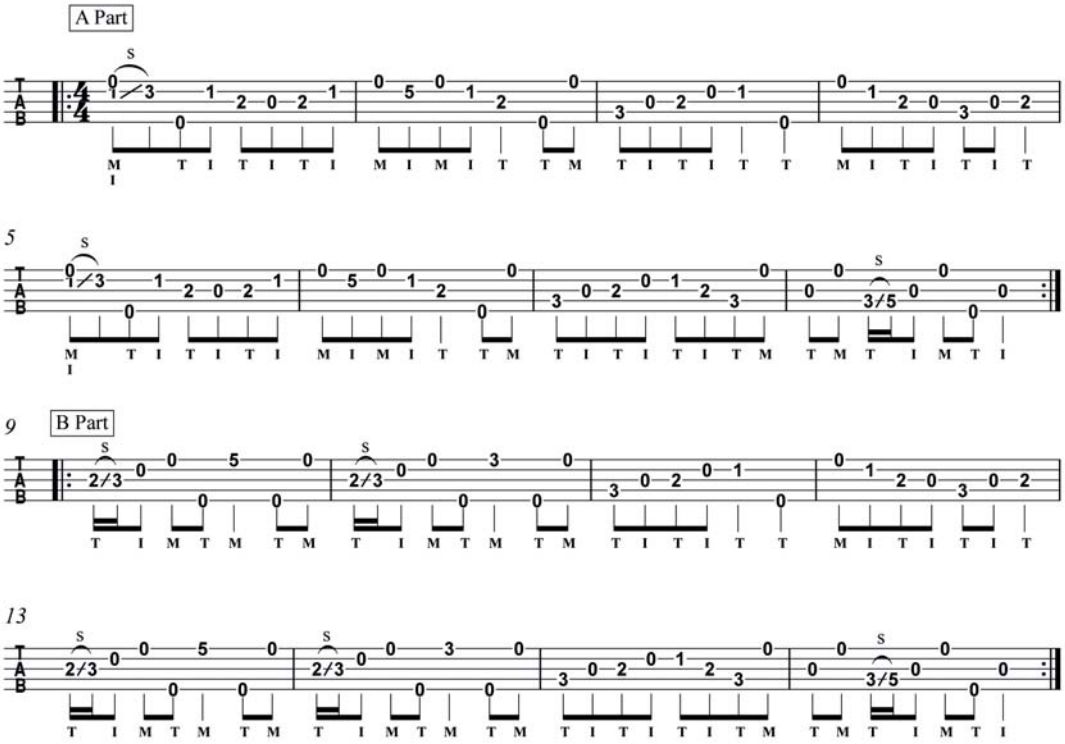
SQUIRREL HUNTERS - STANDARD G TUNING (g, D, G, B, D)

Traditional
Arr. Leon Hunt

Squirrel Hunters

Key of G



hypnotic quality to them, and 'Squirrel Hunters' must be right up there with the best of them.

This is a fairly straightforward arrangement, leaving you a good amount of scope to embellish and personalise as you see fit. There is, however, a fair amount of single-string content so, as ever, be careful with your right hand fingering. It might also be a good idea to listen to as many versions as possible to get a good handle on the tune and especially where the subtle pushes and pulls sit. Type it into YouTube and you'll get loads to choose from.

Leon Hunt

ESSENTIAL HARTFORD

In a momentary return to my musically evangelistic teenage ways I'm going to encourage you to have a listen to some John Hartford. If you're not already familiar with his music you may well discover a new favourite. As an artist that spent most of his career away from the mainstream, although he did have a hit in the late 60s with his song 'Gentle On My Mind' which was also notably covered by Glenn Campbell, Dean Martin and even Aretha Franklin; he would otherwise be fairly easy to miss.

1. *Aereo-Plain* (1971) blazed a trail for a host of other more hippy inspired bluegrass crossover albums and bands that existed throughout the 70s. The whole album is a gem but the high points for me are: 'Back in The Goodle Days' and 'Holding. Boogie' is also worth a listen, if only as a talking point.

2. *Mark Twang* (1976) is a continuation of the spirit of *Aereo-Plain* and is equally bonkers. High points are hard to flag up because the whole thing is superb. If you fancy a good laugh maybe check out 'Don't Leave Your Records in The Sun'.

3. If you've listened to those you'll hopefully be hooked and ready for the remaining 24 that he made throughout his career. Jamie Hartford's 2005 album, *Part Of Your History* is a superb cross section of John's catalogue and a fitting tribute to his father. It features a who's who of the Nashville acoustic music scene. 'Tall Buildings' and 'Gentle On My Mind' are the standout songs for me. The latter featuring Bela Fleck on Hartford-esque low-tuned banjo.

4. Finally, go to YouTube and search for 'learning to smile - electric washing machine'. He's actually playing guitar on this one but its great nevertheless. Stick with it, it starts off fairly ordinarily but becomes more extraordinary as it progresses.

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DANIEL HO
Grammy Award-winning musician

Daniel Ho is a multiple Grammy Award winner and record producer specialising in Hawaiian music. In 2010, Daniel's solo ukulele album *Polani* became the first of its kind to receive a Grammy nomination. He has numerous Hawaiian music industry accolades, has authored eight tuition books and tours the world as an acclaimed songwriter, performer and university lecturer. Daniel was born in Honolulu, but is now based in Los Angeles.
www.danielho.com

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

C & BEYOND

EXPLORING THE COLOURS OF THE C CHORD

The very first chord one learns on the ukulele is the C chord. It is the easiest major chord to play, requiring only one finger on the left hand to hold the third fret of the first string. (***See example 1 and example 2***).

Strumming this chord provides adequate accompaniment to songs like 'Are You Sleeping?' and 'Row, Row, Row Your Boat'. In two minutes' time, you're playing and singing songs! From there, we usually move on to learning other related chords like F, G, Am, etc. But let's concentrate on the glorious chord that got us hooked on this wonderful instrument in the first place, and explore all the harmonic colors that it has to offer.

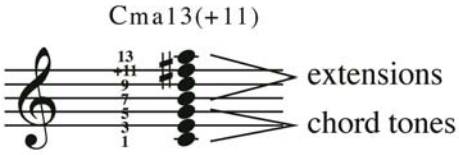
This lesson presents a harmonic method I have been using in my compositions, arrangements and performances for over 25 years. It has served me well, and I hope you find this unique perspective equally useful in your musical creations and ukulele playing. One of the simplest ways to create sophisticated harmonies is to think of notes in groups rather than as individual pitches. This method focuses on modules (groups of notes) with uniform intervallic relationships and how they are used to build more complex harmonies. They are invaluable because their consistent sound and shapes are easy to distinguish and intuitive to play. Though the music is printed in black and white, you'll be surprised at just how colorful these sounds really are!

Example 3 shows all the notes in a C major chord. The definitive notes of a chord, or chord tones, are the root (C), 3rd (E), and 5th (G). The major 7th (B), 9th (D), raised 11th (F#), and 13th (A) are extensions or color tones, which embellish the sound of the chord. The raised 11th (F#) is used because it functions as an extension, or color tone, of the C major chord. The 4th (F) creates a suspended chord (Csus) and implies the resolution of the 4th (F) down to the 3rd (E).

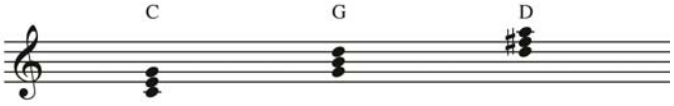
All major chords are made up of a major third and a perfect fifth from the root. Major chords are uniform modules. In ***example 3***, how many major chords can you find? Correct! There are three: C major, G major, and D major. See ***example 4.***

EXAMPLE 1 AND 2

EXAMPLE 3



EXAMPLE 4



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The next step is to understand how to use them. To combine modules effectively, it is important to recognise the chord tones and extensions of each module. This will help to determine their function and placement. In accordance with the overtone series, the root of the chord is the fundamental from which the overtones are created. The lower pitches are primarily chord tones, and extensions are in the higher register (see ***example 5***). Therefore, modules that contain more chord tones are generally placed below modules that have a greater number of extensions. ***Example 6*** identifies the chord tones and extensions of the major triad uniform modules in ***example 4***.

Now that we know how many chord tones and extensions each major triad contains, let's try combining them. In order to hear these rich harmonies, you'll need a friend to play the second ukulele part (see ***example 7***).

Keep in mind that although you're playing a G major triad over a C major triad, or a D major triad over a C major triad, these are all C major chords. This is because the fundamental, defined by the lower notes in the "Uke 2" part, is C. Notice in the third chord in example 7, the D triad is an open voicing. This means the notes in the chord are spread out to give it a fuller sound.

Let's take another look at ***example 3***. Can you find any minor triad uniform modules? In ***example 8*** there are the minor triad uniform modules of a C major chord along with their chord tones and extensions.

Another fun uniform module found in a C major chord are fourths. Here they are in ***example 9*** with an analysis of their chord tones and extensions.

The possibilities are endless, as all of these uniform modules can be combined with each other: minor, triads over major triads, fourths over minor triads, major triads over fourths, etc. Here are a few examples in ***example 10***.

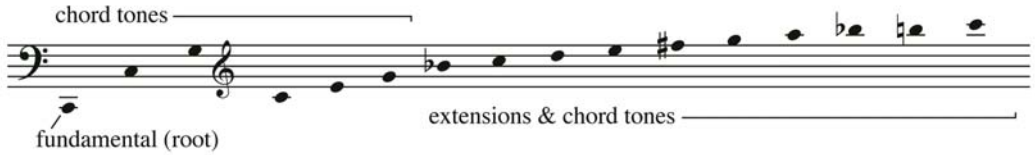
Try playing these chords using arpeggios so you can hear how the notes interact in consonance and dissonance. Of course, you can also strum them, too.

This is only a little glimpse of the many facets of a C major chord. There are many more uniform modules found in the C chord, as well as all the other major chords, minor chords, dominant chords, and altered chords. If you like to write songs, this method provides infinite ways to harmonize your melodies beyond the obvious "ear" chords. Film composers can broaden their sonic palette and use it to create moods and underscore scenes. Most importantly, you can learn to play unique voicings of extended chords on your ukulele!

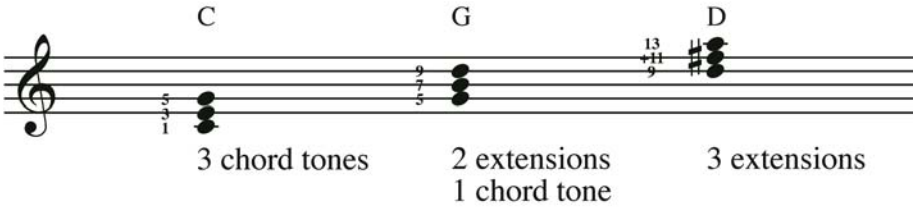
Daniel Ho

For an in-depth presentation of this harmony method, please check out the Colorful Sounds book available at **DanielHo.com.**

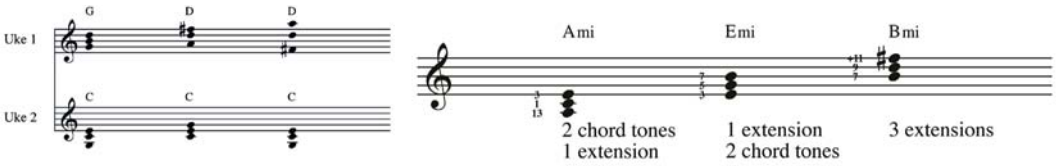
EXAMPLE 5



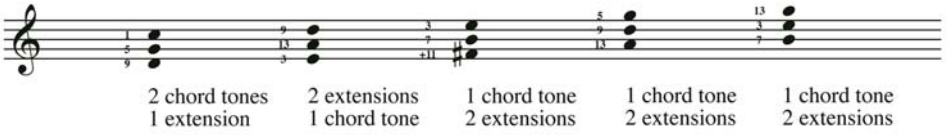
EXAMPLE 6



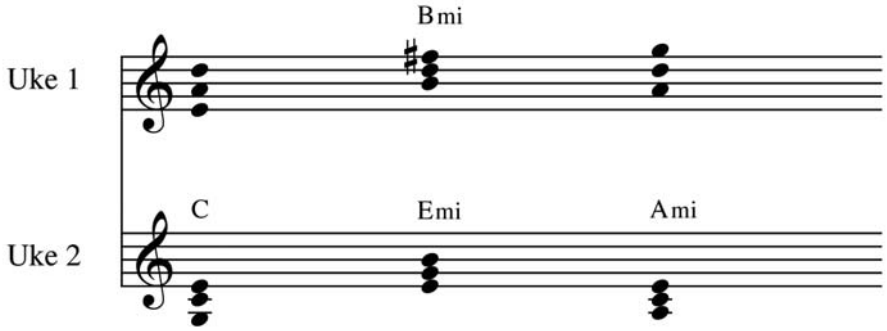
EXAMPLES 7 AND 8



EXAMPLE 9



EXAMPLE 10



THOMAS LEEB

Fingerstyle Virtuoso

Austrian-born Thomas Leeb plays a style he calls "the bastard child of acoustic fingerstyle." This style owes as much to percussive techniques as traditional fingerstyle guitar as his tunes are usually punctuated by slaps, pops and beats. Adding to the overall effect is his frequent use of ringing harmonics. 'What Thomas does on an acoustic guitar probably shouldn't be legal.'

www.thomasleeb.com

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: ADVANCED

TRICKSTER

LEARN THE MAIN RIFF TO THOMAS' NEW TUNE

I just released my newest original song 'Trickster' on YouTube and I thought you'd like to look at the main riff...

The tuning is something odd I made up: C, G, Eb, G, G, D and the rhythm is a 4/4 that is subdivided into 3+3+2. We've notated this in half-time for ease of navigation and reading, i.e. what I feel as half a bar in real life is written down here as 4/4.

All Xs on the fifth string in tab are string clicks; the Xs on the sixth string are right-hand heel bass thumps.

Let's dive in by taking a look at the first half of the first bar: the double bass notes here are right-hand thumb slaps. Try to nail the rhythm here before you proceed, this figure is integral to the whole tune.

The preparatory click on beat three here is what I call a preparatory thumb click: your thumb stays in place after you've clicked it down and waits to pick the subsequent bass note. We're also looking at a downward strum on the final note here. I often like to pretend my index fingernail is a pick.

Bar two may not feel entirely "right", but don't despair, once you manage to play the first two bars together, it should start to make sense. Beat four here is also where we encounter our first right-hand tap. Something very similar happens in the fourth bar: make sure you keep the previous left-hand notes in place, execute the right-hand tap, then pull-off the left and pull-off the right.

Good news if you've made it all the way to bar five, this one is exactly the same as the first one. In bar six, make sure you use a bar chord on the seventh fret starting on the "and" of "two". You can release this once the open first string comes up. No real surprises then until bar eight – the harmonics of the seventh fret are produced by laying your thumb across the bottom strings to produce the click just before, and raking your thumbnail towards yourself to produce the harmonics.

We'll continue this in my next column.

Thomas Leeb

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'TRICKSTER' - THOMAS LEEB

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DAVID MEAD
Tuition Author

David Mead is one of the UK's foremost guitar writers, having authored several best-selling tutors. An accomplished acoustic guitarist, he has released two critically-acclaimed albums, *Nocturnal* and *Arboretum*.
www.davidmead.net

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

DISCOVERING DADGAD

18TH CENTURY LUTE MUSIC FOR DADGAD

This month I thought we'd look at something a bit different. We're travelling back in time to the 18th Century to study a piece originally written for the lute by a German composer by the name of Sylvius Leopold Weiss. It's OK, I haven't gone completely off topic here, in fact I think you'll be surprised at the similarities at work. But first, a little history...

Weiss was a contemporary of the infinitely more famous J.S. Bach; almost an exact contemporary because it turns out that Weiss was born two years after Bach and they both died in the same year. During their lifetime they became friends and would hold "improvisation sessions" or, as we know them today, jam sessions. How I would have loved to have witnessed that! Weiss was a seasoned lutenist and it is rumoured that he was regarded as the best player of his time.

So what's all this got to do with us exploring the more modern DADGAD tuning? Well, as it turns out, quite a lot. Let me explain... Back in those days there wasn't an accepted standard tuning for the lute; after tempered tuning gave composers access to all the keys it was customary for lutenists to tune their instruments to the key of the piece they were playing. Indeed it was often the case that the first movement of a Baroque lute suite was employed to check the tuning was accurate as they often featured melodies played over a drone bass. So most of these pieces were written with an altered tuning (as we would see it today) in mind. Now, they are commonly played using standard tuning with the occasional "scordatura" – which is what the classical boys and girls call any deviation from standard tuning – like dropping the bass string to D. It struck me that this would have the potential to make the pieces harder to play; any piece written for an alternative tuning would probably contain some nasty moments when rearranged for EADGBE, after all. But if we reviewed them in an open tuning, might it be possible to make some of these pieces easier and more accessible for everyone to play and enjoy?

With this in mind, I decided to take a look at an excerpt from Weiss's 'Passacaille', a piece that has often been included in the upper reaches of the grade exams for classical guitar. In fact I think at one time it was considered a diploma level piece. In essence, a passacaille – or passacaglia – is a slow piece written in triple time (i.e. 3/4) that features variations over a ground bass. Meaning that it's basically a set of variations over a set chord arrangement – not too dissimilar from the spirit of improvisation. The little taste I've given you here represents the first eight bars of a much longer piece, but it gets over the essential flavour – and, I hope, my point.

It's not known what the original key of the Weiss 'Passacaille' was in, but it's commonly written out in D major – a DADGAD-friendly key if ever there was one. The only other thing we know, as the tablature (yes, they used tablature back in the 18th Century) still exists in the British Museum, is that Weiss tuned his own 13 course lute to D minor: GADFADF and you can see straight away that there are similarities to DADGAD right there. It's not absolutely the same, but close.

In any case, I thought that it was an experiment worth doing and so I set about reimagining the piece in DADGAD and was quite please with what I found. I've played the 'Passacaille' in standard tuning and it's really quite awkward, especially later on in the piece when it hots up a bit; but in DADGAD a lot of that awkwardness falls away. It figures, because if the piece was originally written in D major then DADGAD wouldn't be miles away from what you'd tune your lute to in order to play it.

So let's look at the piece in a little more detail. At 60 beats per minute, it's very slow, which helps, but it's meant to be quite regal, at the same time. These eight bars represent the first time the chord sequence is introduced and so the melody isn't particularly busy, either.

There are a couple of potential trouble spots: the stretch in bar five might be problematic, but you could always substitute an open G for the bass note and not play the barre at all if it's too uncomfortable. Also there are a few places where you have to be accurate with your right hand in order to play all of the notes correctly. A good example of this is the very first chord; it might feel a little strange to play the bass D with your thumb, the F# with your first finger and the

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'PASSACAILLE' – ARR. DAVID MEAD

remaining two open strings with the middle and ring fingers, but practice should iron this out. Just remember your first time on a bicycle; I bet you got the hang of that pretty quickly and haven't looked back – it's the same sort of thing here!

The only thing I have taken out is a trill – a repetitive hammer-on and pull-off – on the penultimate melody note (i.e. the E on the top string, bar seven) as this would have to be done between the first and fourth left hand fingers. It's 100% possible, but might throw a spanner in the works for some.

Apart from that, Weiss's 'Passacaille' is one of my favourite Baroque lute pieces and so enjoy playing it. Next time we'll come back up to date with another foray into DADGAD tuning.

David Mead

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TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

PERCUSSIVE 12-BAR

SPICING UP YOUR BLUES

I'm always trying to convince guitarists, especially beginners and intermediate players, that there are a host of percussive techniques that fit comfortably into all sorts of more mainstream genres. It doesn't have to be all virtuosic instrumentals! What better way to show this than the blues. It's a genre that has used percussion, alternative tunings and all manner of what we now regard as contemporary techniques, right from the start. So, in this column I have created a 12-bar blues for you, with the rhythm at the heart...

I have composed two examples; the first uses a string slap for the percussion and the second introduces a kick drum sound, created by thumping the heel of your hand against the body in between the string slaps. That's as simple as it gets: two different movements that can bring your playing to life.

EXAMPLE ONE – PERCUSSIVE 12-BAR BLUES

Example 1
Get comfortable with the chords and structure first. It's a 12-bar blues using A7, D7 (with a little spice, courtesy of guitarist Michael Watts) and E7. A7 is played for four bars, followed by two bars of D7 and then two bars of A7. For the turnaround section (final four bars) we play one bar of E7, one of D7, one of

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EXAMPLE TWO – PERCUSSIVE 12-BAR BLUES

there are very few variations, so focus on getting the first bar nailed before moving on. When you arrive at the turnaround section notice how we have doubled the bass notes, but the groove still remains the same.

Example 2

We are sticking with an almost identical picking pattern, but now we are creating our kick drum sound – notably, often played at the same time as a bass note. This comes with a gentle guitar health warning, it's not dangerous though if you approach things gently. If you thump your guitar too hard there is a risk of cracking the wood, just thump it enough to make a sound – start soft and build up to the right volume and velocity. The movement might seem alien at first, but with practice it will become second nature. Simply lean back onto the heel of your hand to thump the top of the guitar, just above the soundhole. Play the bass note simultaneously, take your time and be gentle – notice how the second kick drum sound in the bar is on its own. The pictures are there to help you but are slightly exaggerated to help you visualise the movement – don't hit from a great height.

The kick drum sound and string slaps remain constant. Focus on how you are simply maintaining a basic drum beat throughout the whole 12 bars. The aim is to make this a natural and almost unconscious movement, which happens while you play more traditional fingerpicking. As with many things, it will come quicker if you take it slowly.

Chris Woods

A7, and finally one bar of E7. Once you're happy with the chords and structure, it's time to get familiar with the picking pattern and string slap.

The string slap is on the second and third beat. Simply turn your wrist as if turning a key, and strike the low E string with the side of your thumb to create a click sound. Within the picking pattern

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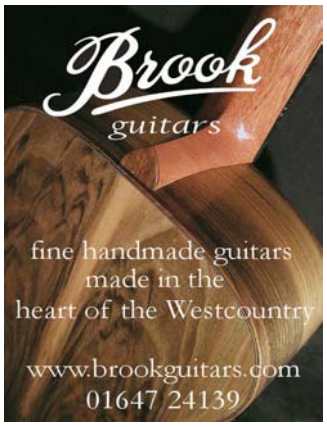

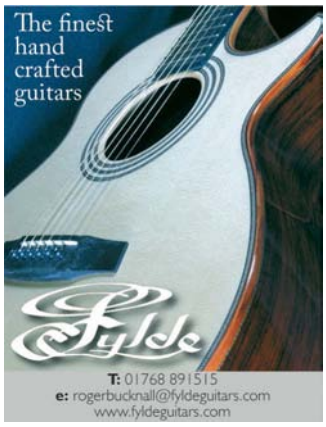

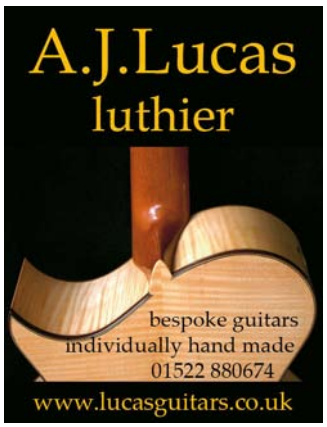

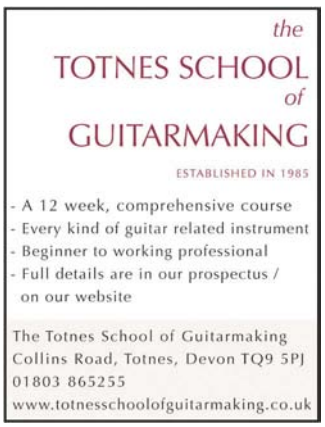

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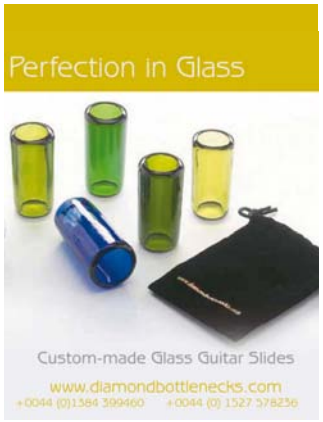

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LEGENDS

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Hank Williams

In his short, meteoric career, Hank Williams birthed the era of modern country music. His film star looks and self-assured performing style pre-dated Elvis and the artists of the rock and roll era. A veritable superstar by his mid-20s, Hank was gone at age 29, having conducted a live-fast die-young life.

Born in rural Alabama in 1923, he grew up during the Depression. Despite poverty, his mother somehow bought her eight-year-old son a guitar. His music education came via a local blues singer who taught him to sing and play guitar. His mentor – street musician Rufus "Tee-Tot" Payne – was the child of slaves and very poor himself. Growing up, Williams listened to the radio, hearing some of the biggest names in country music of the era such as the yodeling star Jimmie Rodgers (who obviously left a vocal imprint on Hank), the Carter Family, and Roy Acuff.

His mother relocated the family in 1937 to Montgomery, Alabama. Eventually she opened a local brothel. Ironically, Hank grew up singing songs of praise in the church choir. He also sang in the travelling medicine shows. Hank won a regular spot on a local radio station, WSFA, in 1941. Pushed by his mother, Williams sang songs from his idol, Roy Acuff, as well as several other country hits of the day. Dubbed "The Singing Kid" he named his band the Drifting Cowboys.

Married young, Williams' first wife was an aspiring singer who became his manager, encouraging a move to Nashville to appear at the Opry. It was in Nashville where Hank was signed (to MGM records in 1947) and quickly he prospered as a musician and entertainer in Music City.

'Move It On Over' released in 1947, became Hank's first single. It was an immediate hit. In early in 1949, he recorded 'Lovesick Blues', a Tin Pan Alley song initially recorded by Emmett Miller. The single was a monster hit upon its release, and in the spring of 1949 Williams sang the song at the Grand Ole Opry, where he performed an unprecedented six encores. He had become a bona fide star.

Hank and his wife started a family in 1949 and that was the year he assembled the most famous edition of the Drifting Cowboys. Williams had seven hits in 1949 after the success of 'Lovesick Blues'.

Williams continued to rack up hits in 1951 including 'Dear John', 'Cold, Cold Heart', 'Hey, Good Lookin'', and 'Howlin' At The Moon' among them.

Though his professional career was soaring, Hank's personal life was in a downward spiral. As he began to earn large sums of money, and spend long periods away from home, he began to drink heavily. His marriage was in free-fall. In the fall of 1951, Hank was on a hunting trip on his Tennessee farm when he fell, reactivating a former back injury. Williams began taking morphine and painkillers, quickly becoming addicted.

In January of 1952, Williams briefly moved back to Montgomery to live with his mother. Meanwhile, the hits continued. In spite of his massive music success, Hank got completely reckless in 1952, spending nearly all of his waking hours drunk and high.

Divorcing that year, Williams returned to Nashville while his ex-wife was awarded the house and their child, as well as half of his future royalties. Williams continued to play lots of shows, but he was always drunk and sometimes missed the gig altogether. Subsequently, the Grand Ole Opry fired Williams, explaining that he could return once he was sober. Instead of heeding the Opry's warning, he sunk lower in self-destruction.

Williams began performing with local pickup bands and began earning reduced wages. That autumn, he met another partner and remarried. By the end of the year, Williams was having heart problems and a conman doctor doled out various prescription drugs.

Hank was scheduled to play a concert in Ohio on January 1, 1953. Due to bad weather, his flight was averted, so Williams hired a teenage chauffeur to drive him in his own Cadillac. Before leaving, Williams was injected with two shots of vitamin B-12 and morphine. Williams sat in the backseat (allegedly with a bottle of whiskey), and they headed north. When they were stopped for speeding, the policeman noticed that Hank looked like a dead man. Williams was taken to a West Virginia hospital and he was officially declared dead on the morning of January 1, 1953. He had died in the back of the Cadillac, on his way to a concert. Ironically, the last single released in his lifetime was 'I'll Never Get Out of This World Alive'. His legacy, of course has only thrived in the ensuing decades since his death.

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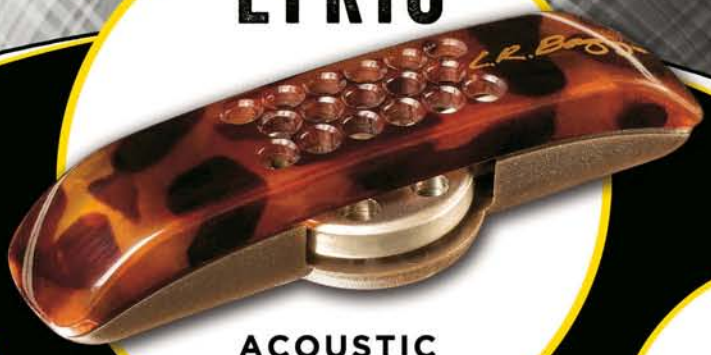

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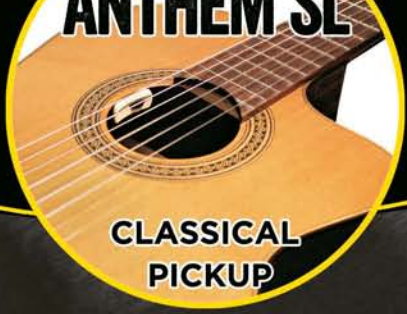

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